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ABSTRACT

National service offers an appealing vehicle for engaging senior citizens to respond to unmet needs in education, health care, public safety, the environment, and other essential areas. Involving seniors in national service will help alleviate the country's pressing domestic problems, enhancing participants' personal development, and bolstering the nation's flagging sense of community. A partial system of national service for seniors that began during the Kennedy administration demonstrated that seniors can provide essential community service, benefit through serving, and play an important role in service. Programs such as the Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companions Program have also made it clear that senior service is not cheap and that obstacles and questions regarding key issues related to senior service persist. Despite the strides that have been made during the past 30 years regarding involving seniors in national and community service, the gap between promise and practice remains substantial. Achieving a vision of senior service that is substantially, but not exclusively, intergenerational requires action on the following fronts: strengthen the three programs currently providing the vast majority of senior service opportunities, embark on a period of innovation and experimentation, and build infrastructure at the national and local levels. (Contains 118 references.) (MN)

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Seniors In National and Community Service:

A Report Prepared for The Commonwealth Fund's Americans Over 55 At Work Program

by Marc Freedman

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the Baby Boom generation approaches retirement and life expectancy continues to increase, America finds itself in the midst of a demographic revolution. The senior population is twice what it was in 1960 and is expected to double again over the next 30 years. By the middle of the next century, seniors will outnumber children and youth for the first time. Few other changes are likely to exert as great an influence on society in the coming decades.

For the most part, the aging of American society is portrayed as a source of impending strife, of new strains on families, social services, and intergenerational relations. But while this transformation presents real challenges, it brings new opportunities as well. America today possesses not only the fastest growing, but the largest, best-educated and most vigorous collection of older adults in our history. In fact, the senior population may represent the country's only increasing natural resource.

How might we harness the productive and humanitarian potential of this resource, and do so at a juncture when unmet needs in education, health care, public safety, the environment and other essential areas are extensive and urgent?

National service offers a particularly appealing vehicle for engaging seniors to respond to pressing needs. Many older Americans are in a position to make the major life commitment--ranging from half- to full-time work for at least one year--that defines national service. As Danzig and Szanton wrote in *National Service: What Would It Mean?*, older Americans "may have more to give and more reason to benefit from national service than any other age group."

THE PROMISE OF SENIOR SERVICE

The rationale for senior participation in national service centers on three overlapping and complementary objectives: alleviating the country's pressing domestic problems; enhancing the personal development of participants; and bolstering our nation's flagging sense of community.

An Untapped Resource for Addressing Unmet Needs

In the context of America's considerable unmet needs, seniors represent hope not only because they are numerous, but because they are potentially available. Increased longevity and early retirement means that seniors are spending a greater proportion of their lives in post-retirement--for many, one-third of their lives. Studies show that retirement frees substantial amounts of time, an average of 25 hours per week for men and 18 hours for women; and that most of this time is spent either watching television or doing housework.

There are also indications that older adults are looking for opportunities to serve. A study sponsored by the U.S. Administration on Aging finds that 14 million Americans over the age of 65 (37.4% of the senior population) might be willing to come forward if asked, while 4 million current volunteers indicate they would like to volunteer more time. Forty percent of those surveyed say the government should be doing more to promote service opportunities.

Older adults may be particularly appropriate for national service assignments. They are experienced workers, family members and citizens, among other things, and are therefore a rich repository of the social capital required by young people to make the transition to adulthood. Studies of older workers and volunteers further suggest that seniors bring reliability, dependability and discipline to responsible assignments.

An Opportunity for Late Life Development

For many, retirement means a jarring transition from engagement to disengagement, from productivity to idleness. Fifty-five percent of elder respondents to a Louis Harris Poll lamented the loss of usefulness after retirement. Isolation and loss of purpose have been shown to increase seniors' risk of deterioration, illness and untimely death.

Conversely, productive engagement and strong social networks contribute to prolonged mental and physical health. A 25-year National Institute of Mental Health study found, for example, that "highly organized" activity is the single strongest predictor, other than not smoking, of longevity and vitality.

Service provides opportunities for engagement, activity, acquaintanceship and growth. According to Erik Erikson, service can meet a deeper need as well, satisfying the impulse toward generativity, the instinctual drive to pass on to the next generation what an individual has learned from life. The final challenge of life, Erikson states simply, involves coming to terms with the notion, "I am what survives of me."

A More Civil Society

In the 1980s, Americans began hearing about the prospect of coming generational conflict, sparked by the contention that seniors were depriving the country's children and youth of their fair share in a political process dominated by elder interests. This argument is usually overstated, but there can be no doubt that in a society divided by class, race and gender, tensions between the generations exist as well. In the absence of cross-generational contact and engagement, these tensions might worsen as the demographic composition of society continues to shift.

National service for seniors--particularly intergenerational efforts--provide a potential antidote to these tensions. Indeed, there is evidence suggesting just such an effect. In the early 1980s, for example, Miami began aggressively pursuing elder school volunteers, who then became the linchpin in a campaign for passage of a billion-dollar school bond issue.

Engaging seniors through service can also contribute to preserving the essential features of civil society, which, many have concluded, is unravelling. In this context, the ideal of senior service is compelling, in the words of Margaret Mead, "as a way to restore a sense of community, a knowledge of the past, and a sense of the future."

THE EXPERIENCE OF SENIOR SERVICE

While compelling in the abstract, the idea of senior service is by no means an untested notion. Beginning 30 years ago and proceeding in fits and starts, a partial system of national service for seniors has developed in this country. This experience offers rich lessons for policy and programs.

The Origins of Senior Service

In Spring 1963, President John F. Kennedy delivered his most important speech on aging, decrying the "wall of inertia" standing between old people and their communities. In response, Kennedy urged the establishment of a National Service Corps, a domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps, that would provide opportunities for community service involving both the elderly and the young. The President's call was an invitation, in Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's words, to "millions of older and retired people whose reservoir of skill and experience remains untapped."

Kennedy's National Service Corps proposal to engage a wide swath of older Americans never made it out of Congress, and with its demise went an encompassing vision of senior participation in national service that remains unfulfilled today. In 1965, however, a more limited incarnation of senior service emerged when President Johnson announced federal funding for a new set of programs engaging low-income seniors in community service. The most prominent new efforts were the Foster Grandparent and Green Thumb programs, both administered originally by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and paying participating seniors stipends equivalent to the minimum wage. Foster Grandparents paired seniors one-to-one with children and youth who were either disadvantaged or disabled, while Green Thumb, sponsored by the National Farmers Union, engaged older adults in highway beautification and other community service projects.

Over time, the Foster Grandparent Program moved to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, eventually becoming part of the federal volunteer service agency ACTION (in 1971). Green Thumb, meanwhile, moved from OEO to Department of Labor jurisdiction and in the process developed greater emphasis on public service employment and job placement. It was joined by projects administered by the National Council on the Aging, the National Council of Senior Citizens, American Association of Retired Persons, and other leading aging organizations--all of which eventually became the Senior Community Service Employment Program, Title V of the Older Americans Act. In 1973, the Senior Companion Program, based on a model similar to Foster Grandparents, and also lodged in ACTION, was started to provide one-to-one support to frail elders.

Today, these programs engage 100,000 older Americans in year-round, intensive, stipended community service of 20 hours per week. While other federally funded initiatives, such as the Peace Corps, VISTA and RSVP, also involve older adults in projects requiring the commitment associated with service, the overwhelming majority of current opportunities are concentrated in the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and Title V initiatives.

Lessons from Experience

Examining the experience of established and incipient efforts provides a valuable perspective on the promise, limitations and future directions for national and community service involving seniors.

1. Seniors can provide essential community service. Evidence of the important contribution of seniors in federally funded service programs is chronicled in more than 70 studies over 30 years. The vast majority of this research focuses on the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs; it suggests substantial benefits both to individual clients and host agencies, indicating that seniors fill significant service gaps, provide complementary skills to staff and other volunteers, and are both stable and longlasting participants.

2. Seniors can benefit through serving. The engine driving senior service appears to be less altruism than a strong and straightforward desire for structure, purpose, affiliation, growth and meaning--and there is evidence from program evaluations and other research suggesting that older participants derive these benefits from the service experience. A study finds, for example, that participants experience "increased self-esteem, renewed feelings of health and vigor, and new and satisfying social relationships with peers."

3. Low-income seniors can play an important role in service. The vast majority of existing service programs enroll low-income seniors, most of them women and many minorities. The efforts of the pasts three decades demonstrate that these low-income individuals--the group most likely to be overlooked and undervalued for their assets--can make a substantial contribution to their communities and can benefit in the process.

4. Government can enable senior service. The current roster of service programs operates on a national scale, involving more than 1,000 projects and 100,000 participants. They demonstrate the important enabling role government can play in the service arena by stimulating, supporting and sustaining service efforts through providing ongoing infrastructure--and doing so without suffocating civic spirit or compromising local control. In short, they reveal the federal government in a critical institution-building capacity. The experience of these programs also highlights their political resilience: they have navigated seven administrations, Democratic and Republican, while building bipartisan support along the way.

5. Implementation is crucial. Effective senior service requires sturdy infrastructure not only at the policy level (as reflected in the government's ongoing enabling role), but at the

program level as well. An overarching lesson of the past three decades' experience in this arena is that program implementation is essential. Experience to date provides us with increased sophistication in this arena and a set of lessons concerning best program practices for training, recruitment, compensation and supervision.

6. Senior service is not cheap. It is not practical to simply call for participants, parcel them out and hope for the best. Responsible programming costs money, notably for adequate staffing and supervision. At present, the annual federal cost for the Foster Grandparent Program is $65.8 million ($3,508 per slot); the Senior Companion Program, $29 million ($3,723 a slot); and the Senior Community Service Employment Program, $390 million ($6,053 per slot). The lower cost per slot of the first two programs is attributable primarily to differences in compensation. The Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs pay a tax exempt stipend of $2.45 per hour, while the Senior Community Service Employment Program provides taxable compensation pegged to the minimum wage (an average of $4.25 an hour).

7. Critical mass is missing. While the absolute numbers involved in senior community service are impressive, at the ground level, these efforts remain small, scarce and scattered. Only about one-quarter of 1 percent of seniors are involved nationally, in contrast to the roughly 5 percent of the eligible population engaged in the Depression-Era Civilian Conservation Corps. The Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs are available in only a small fraction of the counties and have long waiting lists of interested participants.

8. Program limitations exist. First, very few men participate in the programs: only 11 percent of Foster Grandparents, 15 percent of Senior Companions and 34 percent in the Senior Community Service Employment Program are male. Second, by law, these efforts are restricted to low-income individuals, screening out many working and middle-class seniors--including large numbers on fixed incomes that still put them slightly above the eligibility line. Third, available assignments tend to be caregiving, delivering Meals on Wheels or providing support services--offerings that do not begin to approximate the wider variety of tasks seniors might contribute.

9. Obstacles and questions remain. Despite progress, a cultural ambivalence about older adults as serious, capable and productive citizens and service-providers persists. At the organizational level, underutilization of seniors in service assignments is a serious problem, ranging from being ignored through being placed in assignments that do not make full use of their skills and abilities. Host agency personnel often are overwhelmed with other duties, lack training in working with seniors in service roles, or are concerned that elders will impinge on their turf or even displace regular staff. Indeed, we lack knowledge about many key issues related to senior service, including such issues as displacement and cost-effectiveness.

THE FUTURE OF SENIOR SERVICE

Over the past 30 years, we have accomplished a great deal in senior service, constructing the rudiments of a national service system for older Americans and developing our understanding about what it takes to put senior service into action. These accomplishments notwithstanding, the gap between promise and practice remains substantial.

In many ways, we are still subsisting on innovations dating back to the War on Poverty. The great triumph of this legacy is the involvement of low-income seniors in essential community service; the great limitation can be found in the absence of opportunities for the vast remainder of the senior population.

Today, with national service in the public mind, we have an opportunity to reexamine this legacy, to build on the achievements of the 1960s while preparing for the circumstances of the 2020s. A central tasks before us is to close the senior service gap, not only out of a desire to meet current needs but to produce what historian Peter Laslett calls an "institutional inheritance" for the coming wave of older Americans.

The timing is right for other reasons as well. Next year will witness the first White House Conference on Aging since 1971. The 1971 conference produced a doubling of the budget for existing senior service programs and the establishment of new efforts. More important, potentially vital roles for senior service participants exist in many leading policy initiatives of the day, including health care reform, crime control, welfare reform, teen pregnancy prevention and school-to-work transition legislation.

A Vision of Senior Service

In moving forward, we should try to engage a wider range of older adults (in terms of education, income and gender); provide an expanded menu of service roles (within existing programs and through new opportunities); and create new mechanisms for meeting essential community needs while stimulating the growth and development of participants.

We should strive to create a system that provides opportunities at a variety of levels--not only the chance to volunteer a few hours a week (where we have made immense progress over the past generation), but to serve in well-developed half- and full-time opportunities. If these efforts were effectively linked, interested seniors might be in the position to move in and out of various options, perhaps serving half time or more for a year or two, then making the transition to assignments requiring a less encompassing commitment.

Throughout, these efforts should be anchored in a vision of senior service that is substantially, though not exclusively, intergenerational, involving not only opportunities for seniors to serve the younger generation, but to serve side by side with youth for the good of the community.

A reasonable goal for these efforts would be creation of high impact, well-crafted senior service opportunities for 1 percent of the senior population, or approximately 500,000 adults 65 years and older, by 2020. The federal cost for this undertaking would be approximately $3 billion in current dollars (at an average per-senior cost of $6,000 for half-time service, a figure reflecting additional investment in strengthening program practices). In return, communities would receive 500 million hours of annual elder service.

An incremental strategy in pursuing this objective is prudent. We should expand current slots from 100,000 to 150,000 over the next five years, then steadily build toward 1 percent of the population and seek to maintain that proportion as the older adult cohort increases in size.

Next Steps

Achieving this vision for senior service in America will require progress on the following fronts:

1. Strengthen the three programs now providing the vast majority of senior service opportunities.

- Expand the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs. Five years after the Foster Grandparent Program was created, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, citing the program's record of achievement called for an increase its size to 60,000. After 25 more years, the initiative is barely one-third this size, and the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs combined enroll just over half this number. Meanwhile, the vast need for caregiving for children and youth on one hand, and older adults and the ailing on the other--as well as the track record of these programs--strongly support dramatic expansion.

- Reexamine the service dimension of the Senior Community Service Employment Program. Much effort over the past decade has been spent fortifying the job transition aspect of this program. Now, interviews with participants, program operators and national officials suggest, the community service component of Title V might benefit from revamping. Currently, at least two informal strands exist within this program: one primarily serves younger enrollees who join for help returning to unsubsidized jobs. The second, much larger strand serves "career enrollees," those who have essentially stopped looking for unsubsidized work and will most likely remain in subsidized community service placements in nonprofit and public agencies for substantial periods. This second strand should be bolstered to raise the priority, quality and level of service performed, enabling participants to provide the greatest possible contribution to their communities.

2. Embark on a period of innovation and experimentation.

- Engage male seniors, a group that has been reluctant to participate in existing efforts. In addition to making the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs more attractive to this group, establishing new program areas, such as environmental work, apprenticeship efforts and professional services, might draw a greater proportion of men.

- Secure the participation of seniors living above poverty circumstances. A variety of routes toward this goal might be pursued. For example, a portion of expanded Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion slots might be freed from income guidelines entirely. Another option is to develop a high-intensity, stipended, half- to full-time track within the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, which is currently open to participation regardless of income, but is oriented toward assignments involving two to four hours of uncompensated voluntarism a week.

- Develop intergenerational programs in which seniors and youth serve jointly. We need to explore partnerships, for example, between senior service and youth service efforts, including opportunities for seniors and youth to serve side by side in the new AmeriCorps initiative. The concept of an intergenerational service corps equally balanced between senior and youth participants should be explored.

- Conduct experiments involving a variety of compensation and program strategies. It would be useful to compare, for example, the different effects of tax-exempt, sub-minimum wage stipends and taxable stipends at the minimum-wage level and higher. Alternative forms of compensation, such as service credits, health benefits, long-term care credits, even property tax relief, might also be explored, along with a variety of strategies in such areas as training, supervision and support.

3. Build infrastructure at the national and local levels.

- Establish a national center for senior service. A new entity is needed at the national level capable of providing muscle to a set of essential--and long-neglected--marketing, technical assistance, demonstration and research functions designed to raise the level of knowledge, awareness and implementation of senior service across the country. While some of these functions might be carried out internally by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the creation of a not-for-profit intermediary organization is probably preferable. This institution should be established through collaboration by the Corporation and private sponsors, including foundations and major aging organizations.

- Create mechanisms at the local level to give visibility and meaning to the "senior corps" concept. Such local mechanisms, which might well evolve out of existing structures, would perform the following functions: act as a single point of entry for

older adults; perform local marketing among seniors and others in the community; conduct training for seniors involved in community service; develop the capacity of community agencies to use the talents of seniors; promulgate new initiatives designed to meet local needs; and provide opportunities for contact among elders participating in different programs.

Moving forward with this agenda promises potential benefits not only to recipients of service and to participating seniors, but to society at large. Conducted at scale, anchored on sturdy institutional moorings, senior service might well help to create a more "generative" society, dedicated to posterity, striving to extend Erikson's great injunction, "I am what survives of me," until it becomes the defining outlook of a generation.

Our senior citizens don't want handouts . . . They want to continue to make a contribution to their fellow man. They want to continue to be a vital and living part of American society.

U.S. Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, April 1968[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

As its "baby boom" generation approaches retirement and life expectancy continues to increase, America finds itself in the midst of a demographic revolution. Already, there are twice as many senior citizens as there were in 1960, and the over-65 population will double again by the year 2030. Between 2010 and 2030 the senior population will grow by 76 percent, while the rest of the population declines by 3 percent. By the middle of the next century, America's over-65 population will outnumber its children and youth for the first time.[1] Few changes will exert as great an influence over American life in the coming decades.

For the most part, the aging of American society has been depicted as a source of impending strife: of new strains on families, institutions and the economy; of coming generational conflict; of a dramatic increase in age-related dependence and decay.[2] Undoubtedly, the arrival of a much older society will present challenges. However, amid the despair is seemingly little realization that the age transformation brings not only problems to be solved, but opportunities to be seized.

America today contains--and will soon contain to an even greater degree--the largest, best-educated and most vigorous collection of older adults the country has ever known--a population retiring sooner, living longer, and in possession of a wide range of talents and experience that might be applied to the leading problems of the day. In the words of one observer, older Americans may constitute this country's only increasing natural resource.[3]

In short, seniors have considerable productive and humanitarian potential, and ample experience and assets that could be put to use in improving their communities. But because this population is often overlooked, relatively few mechanisms exist to help seniors fulfill their potential. This situation is all the more striking because we so desperately need help in addressing a growing set of unmet needs in education, health care, social services, public safety, the environment, and other essential areas of American life--needs that seem to be spiralling out of control in the current environment of budgetary constraints.

NATIONAL SERVICE FOR OLDER AMERICANS

The ideal of national service for older Americans has grown from the hope that social policy might harness the "natural resource" of seniors for the public good. While many seniors already volunteer a small number of hours every week, national service asks a higher level of commitment--"a major life commitment" in the words of the former Commission on National and Community Service.[4] As typically envisioned, national service would require that "participants sacrifice some degree of personal advancement, income, or freedom to serve a public interest," according to Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton, authors of *National Service: What Would It Mean?*[5] This vision is of a movement of older Americans dedicating their

lives--putting in at least 20 hours a week for at least one year--to bettering this country and fortifying its future.

Indeed, the timing may be right for engaging older Americans in such an enterprise, as national service--buoyed by priority status from the Clinton administration--has moved to the forefront of public policy. Shortly after taking office, President Clinton worked with Congress to pass the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which created the new AmeriCorps initiative and its administrative entity, the Corporation for National and Community Service out of the Commission on National and Community Service, launched during the Bush administration, and the ACTION agency, created by Richard Nixon.

Since its inception, however, national service in the United States has mostly meant national youth service, stretching back to William James' 1906 essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War." Addressing the students of Stanford University, James urged the creation of a peaceable army of young Americans, enlisted against the forces of nature, designed to address urgent national needs while knocking "the childishness" out of the country's "gilded youth"--returning them to society with "healthier sympathies and soberer ideas."[6]

Over the decades, this ideal has spurred such initiatives as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps and John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps, built around vigorous young people fighting forest fires in the West, or idealistically serving in the villages of Africa and Asia. President Clinton himself focused on youth service during his campaign, promising to produce "an army of 100,000 young people restoring urban and rural communities" while hailing national service as a strategy to "harness the energy of our youth."[7]

Despite this longstanding orientation toward youth, there are signs that service advocates are awakening to the demographic changes now under way and to their potential implications for how we go about national service. When "The Moral Equivalent of War" was published in William James' 68th and final year of life, America's average life expectancy was 47 years. A mere 3.9 million individuals--only 4.1 percent of the population--were 65 years or older. But by the time President Clinton called young Americans in his inauguration to a "season of service," life expectancy had jumped by 28 years--an increase over less than a century that went beyond all previous increases in human history.[8]

The President acknowledged the realities of an aging America in his inaugural address. While emphasizing the role of youth in his call to national service, he stressed that far more remains to be done than even the most expansive army of young people can accomplish, telling Americans that room exists in the service movement for "millions of others who are still young in spirit to give of themselves in service, too."[9] Eventually, the language of the new national service act was amended to include not only Americans 17 to 24 years of age--an earlier phrasing--but Americans "17 and up." The "season of service" had grown to "seasons of service."

THE PROMISE AND PROSPECTS OF SENIOR SERVICE

In recent years, the potential contribution of "young in spirit" individuals has inspired an array of proponents to argue that national service might be greatly enriched through senior participation. Among these are Danzig and Szanton, who conclude in their study of options for national service that "persons at or beyond retirement age may have more to give and more reason to benefit from national service than any other age group." They further stress that the national service debate must catch up with the demographic realities of contemporary America.[10]

Their view is echoed by a range of others, including former Health, Education and Welfare Secretary and Common Cause founder John Gardner, who has called for an "Experience Corps" designed to place the "talent, experience and commitment" of older adults "at the disposal of our fellow Americans," and the popular gerontologist Ken Dychtwald, who envisions creation of an "Elder Corps" that would function as the domestic equivalent to the Peace Corps.[11]

Recently, Senator David Pryor, chair of the Special Committee on Aging, added his voice to the chorus, introducing the National Mentor Corps Act of 1993, a measure aimed at harnessing "the many good things" older Americans have to offer our children and youth.[12] Like Senator Pryor, many observers envision seniors involved particularly in service to children. Economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett argues in her book *When the Bough Breaks* that "tapping the energy and compassion of seniors might go some distance toward filling the enormous parenting deficit in our society," and writer Richard Louv, author of *Childhood's Future*, calls for the creation of "a national army of winter soldiers," placing the goodwill and efforts of older Americans in the service of our children.[13] Brookings economist Laurel McFarland has proposed a new national service corps consisting entirely of older Americans and focused exclusively on child care (named the Pepper Corps in honor of the late congressman and elderly advocate Claude Pepper).[14]

All these proposals are in accord with the belief that national service should rest on the complementary pillars of the older and younger generations. This belief is logical enough, given the population in the middle now works an average of 164 more hours a year than in 1970.[15] Seemingly, most of this group would be simply too preoccupied with the fundamental duties of jobs and families to be of much service.

According to a recent survey by Daniel Yankelovich, "Most Americans are convinced that a blend of the energy of youth and the experience of older people is required to solve the country's problems." Two of three polled believed that elders can make an important contribution to community service, a finding as true for young adults between 21 and 29 as for any other age group.[16]

As intuitively appealing as the prospect of senior service is, however, many questions about the feasibility of the strategy remain. Will older Americans show up to serve? Will they do

so at substantial scale? Will they accomplish work of genuine value in a cost-effective manner? These questions are crucial; the history of social policy is littered with appealing notions that have never proved practical.

Whether national service for older Americans follows this pattern, or turns out to be a real boon to our society is yet to be definitively determined. However, in trying to assess what national service for older Americans might actually involve or accomplish, we are not confined to the abstract. During the War on Poverty of the mid-1960s, a set of federally funded projects was launched that today engage more than 100,000 older Americans in intensive, half-time community service. Although created at least as much out of the desire to provide income support to low-income seniors as out of confidence in their potential contributions, these initiatives provide rich, albeit incomplete, lessons for policymakers about the promise and pitfalls of this undertaking. These lessons are further augmented by three decades of research on senior involvement in an array of other service assignments.

THE PERSPECTIVE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

In early 1993, Public/Private Ventures set out to examine seniors' service experience with a grant from The Commonwealth Fund of New York, part of the Fund's Americans Over 55 At Work Program. Building on earlier P/PV research carried out in conjunction with the American Association of Retired Persons, sponsored by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, and drawing on current P/PV research on the Foster Grandparent Program sponsored by the Lilly Endowment, we conducted interviews with more than 100 older Americans currently engaged in service; visited a dozen programs around the country (with particular attention paid to five highly regarded models); spoke with more than 75 experts in the field, including policymakers, researchers, and program operators; surveyed literature in a variety of disciplines pertinent to senior service; reviewed international senior service efforts (specifically those in Great Britain and Canada); and assembled an advisory group consisting of experts in gerontology, national service and senior programs.

Overall, our goal was to assess both the rationale behind and the reality of national service involving older Americans. A year later, we find that while senior service is a compelling idea, and will likely grow even more compelling in the future, a vast gulf exists between potential in this area and what we see in practice. In many respects, this gulf is due to omission: we have done fairly well with what we have tried, but efforts to date involving older Americans in national service activities have been quite narrowly focused. At the same time, efforts to broaden the scope and contribution of senior service will not be accomplished easily, or as the natural byproduct of profound demographic change. Nothing short of a new era of innovation, experimentation and investment will suffice.

Ultimately, this study's findings are encouraging, indicating that national service for older Americans, for all the challenges it presents, has the potential to profoundly change our society. It can do so not only by meeting immediate social needs, but by helping redefine the nature of old age and how elders are perceived by younger generations.

This report begins with an exploration of the rationale for involving older adults in service, traces the history and development of programs and policies in this country, examines available research and lessons from experience, and concludes with a series of recommendations aimed at closing the current gap that exists in elder service. Interspersed throughout are commentaries on the service experience by older Americans engaged directly in aiding their communities. These seniors, participating in programs in Oregon, Arkansas, Minnesota and Maine, offer first-hand accounts of senior service in action.

In the discussion, national service for older Americans (usually shortened to "senior service") is distinguished from both conventional voluntarism and employment, though it has elements in common with both. Unlike most of what is called voluntarism, national service entails a major commitment. Although this kind of commitment generally commands a modest stipend, the defining element of service is not compensation, but a belief in or benefit from the civic content of the enterprise. This distinction is not intended to diminish either voluntarism or employment, but to explain the focus of this report.

SENIORS IN SERVICE:

CHERRY HENDRIX, PORTLAND (OREGON)
FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

Cherry Hendrix was born in Birmingham, Alabama, over 70 years ago; she moved to Portland, Oregon, during World War II to work in the shipyards as a welder. After the war, she left the yards to get a high school degree, eventually working for 20 years as a classroom aide in the Portland public schools. An African-American woman and mother of three, she participates in the Foster Grandparent program at the Woodlawn Elementary School.

There was one little boy had lost his grandmother, and I didn't know that. And he would walk past me every day and say, "I don't like you." Every morning he'd say it, and I'd wonder what did I do to this child. I would say, "I like you," but one day he wouldn't even let me touch him, and I went home that night, worried, thinking, "something's wrong with that child," because this had been going on for several weeks.

The next morning, I kind of took him over and said, "James, do you have a grandmother?" And he screamed at me, "NO! She died! And you're gonna die too!" It just came to me, he didn't want to like me because I was going to die, too, and leave him alone again. So I said to him, "We're all going to die. It's true. But some of us live a long time." And I gave him a big hug, and we've been close ever since that time.

When I walk into the classroom, I make it my business to talk to all of the kids. First, I hang up my coat, then I walk around and call them by their name, and give them a hug, and say something nice about them. One thing I do is touch, and some, at first, are not used to that. They kinda pull back a little bit, but I just touch their hand and praise them. No matter what, I try to praise them.

After that, I have my own desk where I sit and the children can come to me if something is wrong, or if they think somebody has done something to them, then I go to them and talk to them. I put my arms around them. I let them know that I do care, no matter what.

There are some that are hard to love. There was one little boy who hurt kids, even hurt the teacher. He would punch children in the stomach, really beat them up. The strongest little kindergarten kid I've ever seen, and they had to move him to another school. It was hard for me to love this child. You couldn't touch him, he'd hit you, too! It hurt my heart when he left. Even he cried. Something was awfully wrong with that child. It was so sad, and I'm sure he was abused--I see his face all the time.

I've lived in my neighborhood for almost 50 years, and things have changed. People are afraid to walk around. I used to be able to [walk around], but now I can't. It's not that I'm worried someone will do something to me because of <u>who I am</u>, but just about being in the

wrong place at the wrong time. The kids have changed, too. So many homes have fallen apart--so many kids have no stability at home. In the past, even with one-parent families, there was much more stability. But drugs have taken their toll on the families, and on the kids. They're not really mean kids, but they can be out of control. It's all the more reason why they need one-on-one contact.

When you don't have responsibility for creating the lessons, you have time to see the real need of the child--and I have that time. It's different than when I was working [during her career] as a classroom aide. I don't have to be a disciplinarian now, so I can get through to my kids with kindness and love. Before I had to be strict. I couldn't just take one child. But now, even if it takes a whole four hours to get to that kid, I can take that time. And it is much more satisfying. The children really need an education, and I try to help there too. But I have time <u>to love them</u> into doing this, not tell them they have to do it or else!

I took off five years after retiring. Later on, when I signed up for the program, they sent me to Providence Hospital. But I didn't like working in the hospital, it took too much out of me . . . to see the children suffering, where you couldn't do anything to really help them. You're holding a child, who can't even say to you 'I'm hurting,' who's crying, who can't even talk to you about why. It tore me up. I need to communicate with that child, to have a real relationship with that child.

I need to have relationships with the teachers, too. I've been very lucky. There are some teachers that don't have the attitude that you should just sit there. They don't give you nothing to do, and you're afraid to do anything. I don't feel good not doing anything. I'm here to work with the kids. I could be at home doing whatever I want.

I tell myself every year that I'm not going to keep getting up in the morning and going to school, that this is my last year . . . but I can't do it. Every year, I go back because these children have so many needs, and these are needs that older people like myself--retired people--can fill. There are children in this city who have never had a grandparent to hold them, to encourage them.

It does me as much good, because we have needs, too, we want to be wanted, to be loved, to give our love. If we don't have a chance to do that, then it takes something away. That's where a lot of older people are lonely--AND I AM NOT LONELY--no place I go. There's always my "grandchildren"--"Hi, grandma, hi, Grandma Cherry." I live across the street from the school, so most of the kids are in the neighborhood with me; they see me at the store, in the restaurant, at church. Their parents seem to be so grateful that there is someone else that cares about their children.

Some of my friends think I'm crazy, but the leisure life's not for me. This is what I want to do: and nobody can say I'm doing it for the money! There's no money in it! And if there was more money in it, I think it might ruin it. People would start thinking about it as a job, a way to make money.

There is a stipend--and I'm not saying I don't need it--but I'm working because I love the children. I'll work with them until I can't--even if I have to slow my time down, take time off. I need to give what it is I have to give, and love is what I have to give.

II. THE POTENTIAL OF SENIOR SERVICE

The rationale for senior participation in national service parallels that offered for engaging young people in service. Three overlapping and complementary objectives are often cited: helping alleviate the country's pressing domestic problems; enhancing the personal development of participants; and bolstering a flagging sense of community. Proponents place varying emphasis on these goals, but most agree that all are important--and that the true power behind service efforts comes through the charge generated by addressing these goals in combination.

MATCHING UNMET NEEDS AND UNTAPPED RESOURCES

Many see national service as a supplemental strategy for addressing unmet needs in a variety of essential areas, including education, child care, elder care, health care, public safety and the environment. A 1986 study, conducted by Danzig and Szanton and funded by The Ford Foundation, estimates that we could productively engage 3,485,000 full-time national service participants without engendering displacement of existing workers. The same research estimates that 34 percent of participants could work in education; 24 percent in child care; 22 percent in health care (including elder care); and the remaining 20 percent in public safety, environmental, and assorted human service assignments.[1]

A Range of Unmet Needs

In Education, where school systems continue to face severe funding constraints and many jobs are left undercovered or completely uncovered by overburdened teachers, counselors, support staff and administrators, older participants might provide teaching assistance; mentoring; tutoring; counseling; remedial assistance; office and clerical work; and maintenance and repair of school facilities.[2]

In Child Care, the prevalence of working parents and single-parent households creates burgeoning needs that might be met by the efforts of seniors. Among possible tasks in this area are monitoring play, reading and telling stories, cooking and serving food, serving as drivers, and leading games.

In Health Care, older adults could supplement the work of staff and current volunteers in a variety of ways, depending on the setting. In hospitals, public health departments and drug abuse, prenatal, and mental health programs, senior service participants might help with immunization, health education, recreation and craft activities, information and referral, and telephone reception. In home care situations, seniors could provide companionship, assist with household chores, deliver meals on wheels, and provide transportation to doctor's appointments.

In Conservation and Environmental work, the many possible assignments include monitoring of air and water quality, providing park visitor information, planting trees, maintaining hatcheries, and constructing and maintaining trails.

Above All, a Need for Caring

A study by Adam Yarmolinsky argues that the greatest unmet needs in the U.S. today are concentrated in the area of human services, and that some of the most severe might be met by "relatively untrained but caring people at the local community level." According to this study, such people could fill highly necessary roles, including home health aides, classroom aides, playground counselors, library assistants, and helpers in community centers.[3]

Considerable concern centers on the absence of the "human touch" in so many of our social institutions--a deficiency exacerbated by budget cuts over the past decade. While this concern is valid across a wide spectrum of situations, such as among frail elders living alone, many see today's young people as the primary victims.

An increasing number of youth are cut off from the kind of nurturance and caring contact from adults that was commonly available to young people in the past. Changes in the family, workplace and neighborhood have driven a wedge between the generations. As psychologist Laurence Steinberg states, "Few young people in America today have even one significant, close relationship with a non-familial adult before reaching adulthood themselves."[4]

James Coleman of the University of Chicago characterizes this change as a decline in the "social capital" available to young people. He defines social capital as the norms, social networks, and relationships with adults that are essential for youth to successfully navigate the path to maturity. In a study of the relative achievements of public and parochial school students, Coleman provides evidence suggesting that enhanced social capital, not greater curricular demands, is primarily responsible for the superior performance of parochial school students.[5]

Researchers from a variety of disciplines conducting longitudinal studies on young people growing up in risky environments have arrived at similar conclusions about the importance of informal adult support to healthy child and adolescent development. The most extensive examination of this type, in which psychologist Emmy Werner of the University of California studied 700 impoverished children over three decades, indicates that "without exception," the young people who managed to defeat odds stacked against them by not only poverty but high incidence of parental alcoholism and family breakup as well, were those who could count on the support of non-parental adults in the community.[6]

A Vast and Appropriate Resource

Against the backdrop of so many unmet needs, the senior population represents an alluring untapped resource. The argument for engaging seniors in national service goes beyond the

fact that older adults are becoming more numerous. As people become increasingly long-lived (many demographers predict the expected lifespan will rise to 85 by the year 2040), they are also staying healthy longer. Disability rates among seniors have been steadily dropping. At present, only 5 percent of the elderly are seriously ill, while another 10 percent have physical problems that limit their activities.[7]

At the same time, seniors, particularly men, are retiring relatively early. In 1948, 90 percent of men between 55 and 64 were working; 40 years later, only 67 percent of that population worked. The trend toward early retirement--which has leveled off more recently--frees up a substantial amount of time: on the average, 25 hours per week for men, and 18 per week for women.[8]

Indeed, recent studies have shown that many elders are looking for opportunities for paid or volunteer engagement. A 1992 Louis Harris poll revealed that at least 6 million people over the age of 55 are willing and able to undertake volunteer activity.[9] Another current study, conducted for the U. S. Administration on Aging, found that 14 million Americans over the age of 65--a full 37.4 percent of the senior population--"are or may be willing to volunteer if asked."[10] In addition, 25.6 percent of seniors currently volunteering (4 million) indicated they would like to volunteer more time; 40 percent of those surveyed said they felt the federal, state and local governments were doing less than they should to promote and provide opportunities for volunteerism. When these volunteers were asked their preferences regarding the type of volunteer work, helping children was the most frequent response (35%), followed by work with other older adults (32%), and with people with disabilities (29%).

On its face, the simultaneous presence of unmet needs and untapped resources suggests an opportunity for enhanced efficiency in social policy through better matching of supply and demand. Our failure to do so is distressing. As law professor and social activist Edgar Cahn states, "When a society has vast unmet needs at the same time that there are large numbers of healthy, energetic productive human beings for whom the society can find no use--even though they would like to be useful--then something is wrong."[11]

Cahn and others contend that this situation is wrong not only because the unmet needs and untapped resources exist simultaneously, but because there is actually a fairly good match between these elements. Not only are elders numerous and potentially available, they also possess distinctive attributes appropriate to meeting many of society's most pressing needs. Their experience as workers, parents, and community members may position them particularly well--in some cases, better than younger, less experienced service participants--to address some of our most pressing social concerns.

For example, the accumulated life experience of older adults constitutes a rich repository of social capital. Indeed, Werner finds that older adults were one of the most common sources of this kind of support and direction for resilient children. A related but more general point cuts to the nature of age and experience. Erik Erikson and others argue that age is a (though

not sufficient) precondition for wisdom--that while becoming old is by no means synonymous with becoming wise, it is very difficult to become wise without becoming old.[12] If such thinking is correct, we might profitably turn the older population's supply of wisdom into positive action.

Gerontologist James Birren concurs, stating that while "quickness of movement and behavior is the strength of the young, experience and reflection is the strength of the old." Taken together, in national service or through other vehicles, these attributes are a potentially powerful combination.[13]

More mundane in nature, studies of older workers and volunteers suggest that seniors bring to the service process reliability, dependability, and discipline--characteristics that serve to reduce the transaction costs of engaging seniors in these efforts.[14] Finally, growing educational levels among the older population increase the range and skill level of assignments these individuals might tackle.[15]

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LATE-LIFE DEVELOPMENT

The argument for involving seniors in national service goes beyond their potential contribution to others. There is also considerable reason to believe seniors themselves gain a great deal from participating in what John Gardner calls the "great adventure" of service.[16] And there is reason to believe the power of these benefits might function as a sturdy engine to sustain senior participation in the service process, complementing and fortifying motivations rooted in altruism.

To start, the many seniors living on fixed incomes near or below poverty level would benefit from any compensation accompanying service. However, income support represents only the most obvious potential benefit. In a society that tends to push older people to its outer margins, treating them as surplus people whose later years "are lived in a kind of limbo," isolation can be a serious problem for older adults.[17] Seventy percent of adults over 65 report missing the social contact they enjoyed prior to retirement and old age, with many experiencing profound loneliness.[18]

Equally problematic is the loss of useful roles that often accompanies older adulthood. Although in the past, this problem primarily affected men, it now afflicts an increasing number of women. Fifty-five percent of elder respondents to a Louis Harris poll lament the loss of usefulness after retirement, and research conducted at the University of Maryland reveals that the majority of time freed by retirement is spent either watching television or doing housework.[19] All too often, retirement means a jarring transition from engagement to disengagement, from productivity to idleness.

Furthermore, loneliness and loss of purpose have been linked to deterioration among elders. A 20-year study conducted by the Human Population Laboratory concludes that people who are socially isolated have a much higher risk of illness and untimely death than those engaged

with friends and family. These findings are consistent with research at the University of California that suggests a connection between the development of support networks and improved mental and physical health among older adults. The results are also consistent with those from other studies undertaken in North Carolina and Michigan.[20] A 25-year National Institute of Mental Health study found "highly organized" behavior and activity to be the single strongest predictor, other than not smoking, of longevity and vitality among the elderly.[21]

Given these findings, it is not surprising that volunteer activities--which psychiatrist Olga Knopf describes as "an exquisite form of occupational therapy"--entailing social contact and productive roles have been shown to improve significantly the circumstances of elderly participants.[22] For example, one study of persons over 65 volunteering 15 hours a week found they are "significantly more satisfied with life, have a stronger will to live, [and] report fewer somatic, anxious and depressive symptoms than those who do not engage in volunteer work."[23]

A review of the literature on older volunteers and self-esteem finds that volunteer activities satisfy a need on the part of many older adults to repay benefits they have reaped from society over time.[24]

Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles echoes this perspective, arguing in his book *The Call of Service* that a distinct idealism is present in individuals in later life. He distinguishes the "pastoral" quality of older idealism from the more "prophetic" bent of youthful idealism. For Coles, this may be a more durable base, one arrived at through "a longstanding sifting and sorting" of interests and preferences. The elders Coles observes seem to be saying: "Here at last is where I hope to take my modest moral stand."[25]

An important benefit associated with service and voluntarism is the acquaintanceship gained through relationships with those being served, through bonds with other volunteers, and through attachments to program staff. Erikson writes that connections with future generations--most clearly distilled in efforts involving direct relationships with children and youth--are particularly important to older adults, to satisfying what he describes as the impulse to generativity. For Erikson, generativity is the "instinctual drive to create and care for new life," essentially taking care "to pass on to the next generation what you've contributed to life."[26]

Erikson sees these impulses coming together in the developmentally successful older adult as an appreciation of human interdependence, most fully expressed in concern about posterity. The final crisis of life, he states simply, involves coming to terms with the notion "I am what survives of me."[27]

A MORE CIVIL SOCIETY

A strong case for senior service could be built solely on the reciprocal benefits it offers those served and those serving. However, a pair of additional arguments radiating beyond those directly involved makes the case even more compelling.

In the mid-1980s, Americans began hearing about a new generational conflict, as a series of articles raised the specter of "greedy geezers" engaged in "Taking America to the Cleaners"--depriving the country's children and youth of their fair share in a political process dominated by elder interests.[28] A principal contention among those leveling charges of generational inequity is that too many societal resources are being directed toward the elderly because, unlike children, they vote.

This argument goes further, charging that the elderly as a group don't much care about our children, their education, or the future. One *New York Times* article illustrates this perspective, quoting a school superintendent in suburban Phoenix, who complains that the elderly "can generate 3,000 to 5,000 votes for any [education] issue that comes up, and these votes come in at least 90 percent no." The article goes on to present a superintendent of schools in New Jersey who states flatly: "The elderly consistently defeat the budget."[29]

Although the generational inequity argument is often distorted and overblown, there can be no doubt that in our class-, race-, and gender-divided society, tensions between the generations also exist. In the absence of cross-generational contact and engagement, these tensions could worsen as the demographic composition of society continues to shift.

The social isolation of many segments of the senior population plays an important role in this problem. As sociologist Alan Wolfe writes, their situation reflects a larger American trend toward disconnected subcommunities: "The elderly, living longer than ever before, exemplify this development, concentrating (when they have the means) in specific regions and supporting specific industries that cater to their needs."[30]

Ethnographer Mitchell Duneier provides one picture of the dynamic of age segregation in *Slim's Table*, his study of a group of lower-income older black men who congregate at a cafeteria at the edge of an inner-city Chicago neighborhood. Duneier shows how the men feel profoundly alienated from, and rejected by, the younger generations in their neighborhood. With the rise of urban violence, they no longer feel comfortable spending time interacting on the stoops and street corners that traditionally provided the vehicle for bonding between generations and imparting essential social capital.[31]

Elder service--particularly intergenerational efforts--may provide a partial antidote to the disengagement described by Wolfe, Duneier and others. For example, service will not only bolster the exchange of social capital, but could contribute to developing a sense of shared stake between the generations--and even help build an expanded constituency for young

people. Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that these mechanisms can work in just such a way.

In the early 1980s, Miami began aggressively pursuing elder school volunteers, building a corps of 2,500. These volunteers became the linchpin in a campaign among seniors to pass an important school bond issue. In March 1988, 72 percent of seniors voted for the bond, worth nearly a billion dollars, enabling the bill to squeak through. Stories from Brookline, Massachusetts, and elsewhere follow similar lines.[32]

With these results in mind, a number of school districts around the country have developed programs designed to engage elder volunteers in education, giving them direct contact with youth. These efforts are significant not only with regard to the elder population. As Richard Lerer, Superintendent of the Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Education says, "We're going to have more and more people living in local communities without children in school. It becomes critical, therefore, for school districts to understand this phenomenon and to inform and involve these people."[33] (It is worth noting that involvement of older volunteers in these institutions might also open them up to public view and provide greater accountability.)

President Clinton himself has remarked on this process. In a 1990 article, the then-Governor of Arkansas described two counties in his state populated by many retirees: "One would expect these counties to be equally conservative. However, the first votes consistently against tax increases for schools, while the other votes consistently for them." Clinton goes on to explain that in the first county, the retirees are scattered along a lake, living disconnected from others. In the second county, retirees live in planned communities with property owners' associations and many voluntary groups. According to the President, "They spend as much time on the golf course or the lake as those in the first county, but they vote for every proposed tax increase for schools because they have a world view--through their involvement with voluntary groups and other associations--that does not separate their interest from the rest of the community."[34]

While this phenomenon is duly noted, the importance of reengagement goes deeper than political education and expedience, or even the developmental benefits or resource efficiency concerns raised earlier. At root, reengaging elders in the concerns of others, particularly younger generations and the environment, is about preserving essential features of what might be called "civil society."

The basis for a civil society is a sense of interdependence. It is what Vaclav Havel talked about when he addressed Congress in 1990, arguing, "the only genuine backbone of all our actions--if they be moral--is responsibility"--responsibility for strangers, responsibility for posterity, responsibility for the social fabric.[35]

As we near the end of the 20th century, many have concluded that the fabric of our civil society is unravelling. Alan Wolfe wonders whether we are losing "what is social about us,"

while sociologist Todd Gitlin writes that in the America of the "main chance and the fast deal," "our cultural infrastructure seems to be coming apart along with the bridges and roads."[36]

In this context, the ideal of engaging elders to serve is compelling, in the words of Margaret Mead, "as a way to restore a sense of community, a knowledge of the past, and a sense of the future."[37] John Gato, New York's 1991 Teacher of the Year, adds to these sentiments by emphasizing the particular importance of intergenerational service: "Without children and old people mixing in daily life," observes Gato, "a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present."[38]

Several years ago, Erikson, himself in old age, described this "continuous present" as a general and debilitating loss of generativity in our culture:

> The only thing that can save us as a species is seeing how we're not thinking about future generations in the way we live. What's lacking is generativity, a generativity that will promote positive values in the lives of the next generation. Unfortunately, we set the example of greed, wanting a bigger and better everything, with no thought of what will make it a better world for our great-grandchildren. That's why we go on depleting the earth: we're not thinking of the next generations.[39]

Sociologist Robert Bellah, author of *Habits of the Heart*, reaches similar conclusions. Bellah draws on the philosopher Albert Borgmann in characterizing America as a "quintessentially adolescent nation, one in which the main problem is finding our separate selfhood, appropriate enough for real adolescents, but disturbing if one remains stuck with that problem and never outgrows it." Rather, he adds, "the virtue Americans most need today is the virtue of 'generativity,' the care that one generation gives to the next."

Bellah points out that while Erikson initially situated generativity in the concern of parents for children, "he extends it far beyond the family so that it becomes the virtue by means of which we care for all persons and things we have been entrusted with."[40]

Perhaps the most important repository of generativity--what Bellah calls "an overall philosophy of generative interdependence (as opposed to narrowly self-interested individualism)"--resides in the elder population. A society where elders are connected in constructive and interdependent fashion might well be both more generative and more civil.

SENIORS IN SERVICE:

J.R. DOYLE, DELTA SERVICE CORPS

J.R. Doyle is a retired school principal from the Ozarks of Arkansas. A white man in his middle-60s, he participates in the Delta Service Corps, a community service initiative operating in the Delta counties of Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. J.R. supervises an intergenerational team serving in a number of Arkansas counties.

You know, when I retired they gave me a bunch of fishing equipment. Said, "Now here, you get on your boat, do some fishing." Well I went fishing three times and I thought, if this is what it's all about, I'll go back to work. I love to eat fish, but I hate to clean them things. And if they're not biting, to sit there for hours and not get any action, I just could not stand that. So that was the end of it.

I went off to work at a number of jobs. Two summers at the Garden Center at Wal-Mart, which I loved. I'll tell you, Wal-Mart is a good place to work, but they walk your legs off--a little bit more physical work than I wanted to do. I had some friends up there, who know I love to tinker, and they said why don't you come to work up here, we need somebody to sell lawnmowers. I worked the two summers, but when they called me the next year, I said it was just too much. I went on to work as a guard for Burns Security for a while, did three or four things, trying to figure out what I wanted to do.

One day I was home in the morning, I didn't have anything going on, when a public service announcement on the radio talked about the Delta Service Corps taking applications. So I just called the number, not thinking anything would happen, and about a week later I got an application. I sent it in, and pretty soon they told me to go to West Memphis for an interview. I was hired. And with my background as a school principal, handling school situations, I was asked to be a team leader.

By the time you retire, you're programmed to get up and go to work, then all of a sudden you have to get up and think, "what am I gonna do today?" That's probably the hardest thing to adjust to in retirement. You have to figure out what each day's gonna be. That's why I like the Corps, because I've got something to do every day. And I've been meeting a lot of people and just enjoying everybody.

In fact, my youngest son is getting married and he's gonna leave me with nobody in the house and I was telling him the other day I just "thank guns" for the Delta Corps, for giving me a chance to get involved and have some things to get up in the morning and look forward to doing. I'm a people person, like to help people, get a good feeling out of putting something back into a society that I've taken a lot from these 60 years.

The Corps has been quite a bit different than I expected. I've had to learn some new things. How to get along with different kinds of people, people who've had a lot of bad luck, who poverty's really dealt a bad hand. Like at the food bank in Mountain View, the people who come in there. I dealt with poverty some in the school business, but this is much more extensive.

And there's another side to it--the contact with others in the Corps. Where I'm from, it's all white; in the Ozarks, the black population is 5 percent or less. There's practically none. And coming down here and learning about different people's day-to-day lives has really broadened my outlook, on the racial issue particularly. And some of my new friends are black people, from whom I've really learned a lot--to understand--and I just appreciate that.

We had a guy from New Orleans, a black man, who died a few weeks back; he had a heart attack, and it just devastated me, about Don Harding passing away. I had met him in Little Rock, in training, and we spent a couple of weeks together. Just an outstanding human being, and he was trying to make a difference in the New Orleans area with the drug problem. We lost a good man when we lost Don Harding . . . I guess that's one of the casualties of having seniors working.

The training was really bonding, almost too much sometimes. When you come out of training you feel like you're ready to solve all the problems of the world, that you can do it overnight. It's almost like a revival program in the church. We have a lot of church-affiliated people in the program, although I'm not really involved in church work. I think that this is one of the things that this program does for me: it gives me this avenue to help without being church affiliated.

I'm fortunate in that I'm financially in a position where the stipend is not that big a factor, although, let's face it, I appreciate the fact that I don't have to spend any extra money to serve. And it's a motivator, definitely. Later, after my two years in the Corps, I may volunteer, but then I'll be drawing social security and I'll have some extra income. The stipend allows me to do things; like the other day, I bought food for everybody at our team meeting. It helped make people want to come to the meeting, knowing that "old J.R." is gonna buy 'em dinner. And when people have to drive in for team meetings, I can give them money for gas. And I probably couldn't do that if I wasn't getting a stipend.

One of the advantages you have as an older team leader is the experience as a supervisor. I also think people take supervision a little better from an older, gray-haired person than from a young person. I don't know whether it's a father image or what. Of course, my style is different than when I was a principal--I can't be as autocratic! We still do corporal punishment in Arkansas! I sure as hell ain't gonna bust nobody's butt in the Corps when they break a rule, if you know what I mean!

I have three sites. The Northeast Arkansas Foodbank is in Baxter County, where we have two part-time participants and a full-time participant, and they work distributing food,

interviewing people who come in and are in need, making sure they get something to eat. When I was up there the other day, a house fire had destroyed one family's home, and they were getting clothing to these people. Another site is in Mountain View, Arkansas, a senior citizen center. Our participant, Bud--he's over 60 himself--is involved in preparing and delivering Meals on Wheels. We have another site, in Batesville, Arkansas, a volunteer clearinghouse, where a young girl, college age, is running the clearinghouse. She uses a computer to match up organizations that need volunteers with the bank of people willing to work.

I've supervised both young people and older folks. It seems like most of the young people, they're good people, they do good work, but their motivation is different. They are focused on the post-service benefits--the college scholarship--what's in it for them in the future. People like Bud and I--who've reached this philosophical age--you really just want to help. This is almost human nature. When you're young you want to make that million dollars; when you get older, well, you begin to realize, "I'm not gonna make that million, I'm just gonna take what I've got, and be happy with it." And there is just a natural, philosophical difference between the ages, and you just have to understand that to reach different people.

III. THE ORIGINS OF SENIOR SERVICE

Much current interest in national service involving older Americans is driven by the sharp and ongoing increase in the senior population. However, senior service is not an entirely new idea, nor merely the product of changing demographics. Beginning 30 years ago, before the age revolution, a partial system of national service for older Americans has emerged in this country and has proceeded in fits and starts. This chapter traces the origins and development of this legacy, from the roots of senior service to the contours of the current landscape.

THE BIRTH OF SENIOR SERVICE

Three decades ago, in Spring 1963, President John F. Kennedy delivered his most important speech on aging, decrying the loneliness and isolation afflicting older Americans, "heightened by the wall of inertia" standing between a great many seniors and their surrounding communities. In response, Kennedy urged the establishment of a National Service Corps "to provide opportunities for service for those aged persons who can assume active roles in community volunteer efforts."[1]

Kennedy's proposal constituted a radical departure from current and past practice. At that point, only an estimated 11 percent of the older population were involved in any formal or informal volunteer activity. Furthermore, the experience of seniors in the kind of intensive and challenging assignments being proposed--full-time, stipended service, with a minimum one-year commitment, fighting urban and rural poverty--was virtually nonexistent.

In addition, national service historically meant youth service. And while Kennedy had every intention of including young people in this attempt to formulate a domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps, the potential contributions of older and younger Americans would be given equal weight in the new National Service Corps (NSC). According to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who chaired the task force to develop the new program, the NSC was a call to service to "college students and retired persons," a challenge to youth but equally "to millions of older and retired people whose reservoir of skill and experience remains untapped."

Testifying before Senator Harrison Williams' special committee to investigate the feasibility of the NSC, the Attorney General delivered a passionate appeal for the prominent place of older Americans in domestic service:

> Millions of Americans who have years of productivity and service to offer are dormant. Retired teachers, craftsmen, tradesmen really don't want to go to the seashore to fade away. They want to help. So many of these people have come forward that I am convinced they can accomplish something unique in

this country, something undone by all the Federal, State, county and private agencies, something still to be done.[2]

Over the ensuing period of testimony, RFK's perspective was endorsed and amplified by a procession of government officials and private citizens. Seven days later, Sargent Shriver, the founding director of the Peace Corps, assured the Senate committee that "a substantial number of retired people . . . would apply for the National Service Corps and that they could be effectively used."[3]

Secretary Anthony Celebrezze, of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), described seniors as a "vast manpower and womanpower resource," arguing that older adults would bring wisdom, skills, and maturity to the Corps. Celebrezze offered as evidence the composition of the retiree population in 1963, which numbered among its ranks 126,000 schoolteachers, 36,000 lawyers, 3,000 dieticians and nutritionists, 18,000 college faculty members, 12,000 social and recreation workers, 11,000 librarians, 32,000 physicians, and 43,000 professional nurses.[4]

Despite enthusiastic backing from the President, Robert Kennedy, Shriver, and others in the Administration, outside support from a wide range of social service and civic organizations (even Malcolm Forbes testified on behalf of the legislation), and leadership from Harrison Williams--who would go on to promote senior service efforts in the Senate throughout the 1960s--the National Service Corps was defeated in Congress, where reactionary lawmakers portrayed it as a backdoor to racial integration in the South.

With the demise of the NSC went an encompassing vision of senior participation in national service that remains unfulfilled today, despite a legacy of more narrowly defined efforts developed piece by piece over the past three decades.

SENIOR SERVICE AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

The death of JFK's National Service Corps led, through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, to the birth of VISTA. Gone from the reincarnated effort, however, was the emphasis on the contribution of seniors. In general, senior participation was not a priority for the newly created Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). OEO's focus was on youth, and its philosophy was that programs involving the younger population held the key to breaking poverty's cycle. A social investment in youth, it was hoped, would pay a higher dividend over the long term.

Furthermore, the elderly seemed particularly hard to involve. OEO's Director, Sargent Shriver--earlier an integral part of the National Service Corps' task force--was initially reluctant to integrate seniors into OEO's efforts. He told a Senate committee, "The majority of persons over 65 will not be effectively reached" by programs involving them in community service; instead, Shriver recommended bolstered income transfers and enhanced

social services. His deputy, Robert McCan, explained, "It's harder to reach the old. Unlike young people in poverty, they suffer in silence. They don't readily come forward to enlist."[5]

At the time, however, five and a half million elderly Americans were poor, nearly 30 percent of the senior population (in comparison with 12 percent today). Many in Congress felt OEO should do something about this problem, and once again Robert Kennedy was in the forefront, as were his brother Edward, and George Smathers of Florida. The three Senators brought increasing pressure on the OEO to find a way to involve and assist low-income older Americans. Smathers argued, "There is a clear need for much more widespread understanding that the war on poverty is directed at all age groups, not only at youth," and held hearings on the subject.[6] The bottom line was becoming clear: the OEO would do more to help older Americans or OEO would not get its budget passed by Congress.

Facing considerable time pressure, OEO contacted the Office of Aging within HEW, contracting a series of concept papers to be prepared over the summer of 1965. These papers outlined ways in which the elderly could become involved in community service.

The emphasis on service efforts came in large part from then-President Lyndon Johnson's adamant opposition to income transfers for the poor. Shriver was instructed that under no circumstances would there be any "doles." Lester Thurow, then a junior staff member of the Council of Economic Advisors, was required to carefully review the Economic Report of the President and expunge anything that could be construed as a reference to putting cash in the hands of poor people.[7]

On August 28, in an address from the LBJ Ranch, President Johnson announced $41 million in funding (soon cut in half) for a new set of programs, stating: "The aged poor have maturity and experience to offer. They are eager to help themselves and others. We are going to use this rich untapped human resource to help others less fortunate. In turn, it will enable these elderly people to find the dignity and usefulness they seek."[8]

While much in Johnson's message about untapped senior resources echoed Kennedy and the National Service Corps task force, a distinguishing difference was the new focus on poverty--not only poor people benefitting from the efforts of participants, but poor people becoming engaged in service themselves.

The new efforts targeting low-income elderly would be run by Shriver and the OEO. In addition to creating new roles and functions for older people and providing services to local communities, a third goal of income support and employment was now an essential part of the equation.

The first of the four new service programs involving low-income elders was the Foster Grandparents Program, which set out to match 1,000 "needy" older citizens (with incomes below $1,500 per year) with 2,500 children living in orphanages and other institutions in 21 sites around the country. The seniors would serve as "substitute parents," spending four

hours a day, five days a week feeding, cuddling, rocking and exercising disabled children. In return, they would receive stipends of $1.25 an hour.

According to former program officials, just prior to announcing the Foster Grandparent Program, Johnson changed the age of eligible participants from 55 to 60. The President had himself turned 57 that same weekend and wasn't about to be considered a senior citizen himself. Sixty has remained the minimum age for Foster Grandparents for nearly three decades.[9]

The other programs created under the new directive were Home Health Aides, which recruited low-income seniors to provide in-home unskilled nursing tasks and personal contact to frail and needy individuals; the Medicare Alert program, which engaged senior citizens around the country in the process of informing the elderly poor about new benefits available through Medicare; and Project Green Thumb, sponsored by the National Farmers Union and initiated under the federal government's Operation Mainstream program. Green Thumb began as a pilot putting older rural residents to work on projects in Arkansas, New Jersey, Oregon and Minnesota; it was enthusiastically supported by Lady Bird Johnson, whose interest in highway beautification influenced the early shape of the program.[10]

The road to senior service was not traveled easily. When the Foster Grandparent Program was first announced, for example, the effort was met with enormous skepticism by professionals in the children's field. During a conference, held by special invitation for the 50 most progressive children's institutions in the country, there were no applications to participate. Officials from the institutions expressed concern about seniors bringing disease into their agencies, being incapable of handling the work, molesting the young people and lacking transportation to the sites.[11]

Following this disastrous conference, with tremendous time pressure to get the Foster Grandparent Program off the ground, staff worked round the clock to redesign the effort. A revised model included health examinations, transportation, a uniform, and other measures responsive to the criticisms received; it was then presented to 50 more institutions invited to Washington to learn about, and hopefully, apply for participation in the effort. After extensive handholding--Office on Aging personnel actually wrote proposals for some projects--21 projects were funded.

As poverty among the elderly remained high, and early research and experience suggested that Foster Grandparents and the other efforts were working better than anyone had hoped, political pressure to expand senior service continued to emanate from the Senate Aging Committee under Harrison Williams' leadership. Throughout the 1960s, the committee promulgated bill after bill designed to create a more expansive senior corps. In 1966, two separate bills, one to create a National Community Senior Service Corps, and another to establish a Talented American Senior Corps, were put forward, knocked down, and reintroduced before ultimately ending in defeat.[12]

The barriers to establishing an overall effort were both philosophical and political. Considerable wrangling occurred over whether the focus of senior corps efforts should be community service or income support through employment. This tension was reflected bureaucratically in ongoing turf battles between HEW and the Department of Labor (DOL). Williams' Senate Aging Committee would attempt to situate programs in the Older Americans Act administered by HEW, while Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor, would attempt to bring them under his domain.

During 1967 and 1968, a sorting process occurred. Service-focused projects were parcelled to HEW (including both purely volunteer and stipended efforts) and employment-focused efforts were placed under DOL. Meanwhile, the Senate Aging Committee continued to press, unsuccessfully, for a national program that would transcend these differences and enlarge the demonstrations already under way.

The Committee wrote in 1968, in its annual publication, *Developments in Aging*:

> The soundness of the concept of community service by older Americans--either as paid participants or as volunteers--has been amply demonstrated in many promising pilot programs. The committee renews its recommendation that advantage be taken of the lessons learned within recent years, and that a comprehensive national program--using all available resources by Federal, State, and local levels--be considered by the Congress and enacted into law at the earliest possible date.[13]

The Committee pressed for national service legislation for seniors through 1969 and 1970; by that time, however, balkanization was complete. The Foster Grandparent Program was lodged at HEW and continued to move in the direction of "service," while Green Thumb, joined by a new Older Worker Community Service demonstration awarding grants to the National Council on the Aging, the National Council of Senior Citizens, and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), was situated in DOL, with an accompanying focus on public service employment.

By the end of the Great Society years, the window of opportunity to create an encompassing senior corps had passed. The institutional arrangement set during the Nixon administration survived into the 1990s.

In 1971, the Foster Grandparent Program was incorporated into the newly created ACTION agency, along with the Peace Corps, VISTA, the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the Active Corps of Retired Executives (ACE). That year, half of the Foster Grandparent budget of $10.5 million was expected to be used to fund a new Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), an effort to place seniors in volunteer assignments. Because RSVP participation involved no stipend, no income guidelines and no minimum hourly commitment, the administration was hoping to gain higher numbers of participants for the same funding allocation.

The timing of this decision was poor, however; 1971 was the year of the White House Conference on Aging, and the high profile of this event made it a bad time for politicians to cut senior programs. In a dramatic turnaround, President Nixon announced at the White House Conference, chaired by former HEW Secretary Arthur Flemming, that he would increase funding for the Foster Grandparent Program to $25 million (the number of projects doubled, from 67 to 133 between 1971 and 1972), provide an initial allocation of $15 million for RSVP, and create the Senior Companion Program, which was modeled after Foster Grandparents but would serve frail elders instead of children.

While the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and RSVP programs were clustered under ACTION, Green Thumb and the other Older Worker Community Service demonstration programs remained at DOL. The DOL cluster was enlarged eventually--and considerably--adding the U.S. Forest Service and the most prominent ethnic aging organizations as sponsors. In 1978, the program was renamed the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), under Title V of the Older Americans Act.[14] During the 1980s, many Title V programs veered further from community service as the federal government raised placement objectives for the program and sponsors sought to "transition" an increasingly higher percentage of older workers into unsubsidized jobs.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE TODAY

A generation after the demise of Kennedy's National Service Corps proposal and the emergence of the more narrowly defined, low-income-oriented Foster Grandparent and Green Thumb initiatives, these programs and the efforts they helped spawn constitute the most prominent institutions on the current landscape.

According to various estimates, approximately 40 percent of Americans currently over the age of 60 are involved in some form of voluntary activity; however, the overwhelming majority of senior voluntarism is for a few hours a week. A study commissioned by the Administration on Aging finds an average of 4.4 hours a week; another by Louis Harris estimates a typical weekly contribution of 4 hours, while a third put the weekly average at 1.5 hours.[15]

In other words, very few senior volunteers made the "major life commitment" that we earlier defined as commensurate with national service, i.e., working half-time on a sustained basis. The Louis Harris survey suggests only 8 percent of all volunteers do so; other studies place the percentage even lower.[16] Still, the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and Senior Community Service Employment programs engage 100,000 older Americans in approximately 100 million hours of community service annually.

The Foster Grandparent Program involves 23,000 volunteers in 275 projects across the country, and, along with Senior Companions and RSVP, is part of the newly classified National Senior Volunteer Corps run by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Foster Grandparents are low-income individuals 60 years and older who

live below 125 percent of the poverty level. They receive a tax-exempt stipend of $2.45 an hour to work 20 hours a week, usually five half-days. Foster Grandparents work with young people with "special needs"--in practice, youth who are either disadvantaged or disabled. In Fiscal Year 1992, the program served 89,000 children, one-third of them in schools, 17 percent in day care centers, 12 percent in mental retardation centers, and 10 percent in Head Start centers. The largest proportion of volunteers (27%) focus on literacy issues, but substantial efforts are also directed toward caring for abused and neglected children, developing child-raising skills with teenage pregnancy, counseling juvenile delinquents, and aiding children with disabilities. Of the participants, 34 percent are between 60 and 69, 50 percent are between 70 and 79, and 16 percent are over 80. Fifty percent are white; 36 percent are black, 9 percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are Asian, and 3 percent are Native American. Ninety percent of participants are female. Nationally, the project's budget is $95 million, with $65 million coming from federal sources and $30 million from non-federal sources.[17]

The Senior Companion Program was established in 1973 and involves 12,000 volunteers in 182 projects nationally. Recently called the "best-kept secret in government" by *NBC Nightly News*, it has the same requirements for participation as the Foster Grandparent Program and provides the same compensation and benefits. The essential difference is that Senior Companions serve homebound seniors and others with severe physical or mental limitations who are at risk of institutionalization. They seek to ease the burden on caregivers and home health workers, primarily through non-medical services, such as companionship. More than one-third (37%) of the 36,000 clients served annually are classified as having "chronic care disabilities"; another 18.5 percent need respite care, a figure that includes patients with Alzheimer's disease; 9 percent are emotionally impaired; and 9 percent are blind. In addition, 66 percent live alone, more than 40 percent have difficulty walking, and 20 percent require assistance in bathing.

Seventy-nine percent of companions work in private homes and apartments. The vast majority (88%) of home clients are over 60, and 61 percent are over 75 years old; 6 percent are between 46 and 59; and another 6 percent are between 22 and 45. Eighty-five percent of companions are women; 54 percent are white; 32 percent are black, 9 percent are Hispanic, and 5 percent are either Asian or Native American. The project receives $29.5 million in annual federal funding, and $16.8 million from non-federal sources.[18]

The Senior Community Service Employment Program, or Title V, involves 65,300 older adults nationally. To participate in Title V, a potential enrollee must be over the age of 55; 75 percent of participants must be living below poverty level, while the rest can be at 125 percent of poverty level. Senior participants work 20 hours a week for the minimum wage of $4.25 an hour and minimal benefits. The program combines the objectives of income support, job placement, and community service. Nationally, the placement rate, which (as already noted) has grown in emphasis over the 1980s, currently stands at approximately 22 percent; however, this figure varies widely by sponsor, with AARP projects achieving the highest placement levels. In terms of community service, some participants perform

functions akin to Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, but the Title V program has latitude to provide whatever services are required locally. Seniors in the program deliver Meals on Wheels, provide child care and work with the homeless, as well as perform a range of clerical, support, and janitorial functions in the context of public and nonprofit host agencies.

Two-thirds of services are delivered to the general community; with social services (16%) and education (15%) the biggest service categories; the remaining services assist the elderly community. Most participants are women (71%), and nearly half have at least a high school degree (19% have some college education). The age of participants is evenly balanced: 17.1 percent are 55 to 59; 25 percent are 60 to 65; 26.2 percent are 65 to 69; 18.7 percent are 70 to 74; and 12.9 percent are 75 and older. Most participants are white (61%), but 24 percent are black, 9 percent are Hispanic, and 6 percent are either Indian, Asian, Alaskan or Pacific Islander.[19]

In addition to these efforts, which are the largest programs in the country involving seniors in service assignments requiring extensive commitment--a wide array of other initiatives are worth mentioning.

Under Subtitle D of the *National and Community Service Act of 1990*, a series of programs were funded as models for future national service efforts. A number of these pilots, including the Delta Service Corps and Georgia's Peach Corps, include older adults in service, frequently in joint service with younger participants.

Another federally funded effort, involving more than 1,000 seniors nationally, is the Senior Environmental Employment Program (SEE), which pays seniors between $7 and $12 per hour in full- and part-time positions to perform a wide range of environmental tasks, such as surveying schools for asbestos or working as ombudsmen for small businesses affected by EPA regulations. Participants' backgrounds run the gamut from the executive office to blue-collar trades.[20]

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) engages 4,000 full-time volunteers, who receive a subsistence allowance and an end-of-service stipend equal to $95 for each month of service, plus health and other benefits. Formerly administered by ACTION and now by CNCS, VISTA focuses on helping low-income communities develop problem-solving capacities in the areas of hunger, literacy, employment, housing, and health care. Twenty percent of VISTA volunteers are over the age of 55.[21]

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) mostly involves volunteer assignments of a few hours a week; however, some of RSVP's 432,500 volunteers work more than 10 hours per week, and a small number work half to full time. RSVP, which evolved out of Project SERVE, a program on Staten Island, largely functions as a broker, working with host agencies to develop their capacity to use senior volunteers; counseling potential volunteers; and channelling seniors to a wide range of community organizations, including senior

centers, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, and other settings. Volunteers receive no compensation, but may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.[22]

SCORE (Senior Corps of Retired Executives), established by the Small Business Administration (SBA) in 1964, was the first initiative to use retired business executives as counselors and consultants to small businesses. The program, which was briefly housed under ACTION and is once again part of the SBA, has 13,000 volunteer members serving in approximately 750 locations, working primarily on helping recipients of SBA loans in assignments that are often intensive but do not usually entail long-term commitment. An objective of the program is reducing default rates on these loans. One-to-one counseling is provided to businesses without charge, and a small fee is collected for training sessions conducted on topics ranging from pricing strategies to marketing. Volunteers are offered reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, though less than half actually apply.[23]

Also on the public side, the Administration on Aging sponsors a variety of senior volunteer programs, but like RSVP and SCORE, they tend to engage individuals on a low-intensity basis.

There are numerous important privately initiated programs involving seniors in service to their community, though most tend to be specific to a local community. Such efforts as the National Council on the Aging's Family Friends project, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded Interfaith Volunteer Caregiver Project, the National Retiree Volunteer Coalition, and the National Executive Service Corps, as well as numerous school volunteer programs, involve a substantial number of older Americans in volunteer efforts for at least a few hours a week.[24]

One national demonstration requiring commitments compatible with national service is Linking Lifetimes. Developed by Temple University's Center on Intergenerational Learning, Linking Lifetimes was formed in 1989 as a demonstration project to test the capacity of older adults to mentor vulnerable youth. The project was funded by a consortium of private foundations and launched in nine sites: Syracuse, New York; Memphis; Miami; Detroit; Los Angeles; Hartford, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; Springfield, Massachusetts; and St. Petersburg, Florida. Seven of the sites focused on adolescents in schools and community organizations, while two concentrated efforts on adjudicated youth. Across the sites, the program involved approximately 175 seniors in working with 300 young people.[25]

In St. Petersburg, youth from the Boys Clubs are matched with elders recruited by Jewish Family Services. One of the Boys Clubs is adjacent to a public housing project and serves a predominantly minority population. In Miami, the program targets seniors and youth residing in two large housing projects: Liberty Square and Edison Square. In Memphis, Linking Lifetimes targets seventh- and eighth-grade mothers who attend a special alternative high school to keep pregnant teenagers in school, and uses Foster Grandparents in service.

A PORTRAIT OF FIVE PROGRAMS

With the most prominent features of the senior service landscape charted in the previous sections, this section seeks to provide additional perspective by zeroing in on a set of exemplary programs. Five such programs were visited for this study, chosen on the basis of reputation and the advice of experts in the field. These efforts are sketched briefly here, are returned to in subsequent sections, and are backdrops for the between-chapter senior narratives. While this set of programs cannot be considered fully representative of the range of service programs, they are helpful examples of possibilities and real-world exigencies of senior service.

The five programs visited for this study are the Portland (Maine) Foster Grandparent Program, the Minnesota Senior Companion Program, the Delta Service Corps, the Orlando Senior Community Service Employment Program, and the Springfield/CPM Mentor Program.

The Portland (Maine) Foster Grandparent Program is administered locally by PROP, the People's Regional Opportunity Program, a community action agency. The program fields 110 Foster Grandparents in and around the city of Portland, all but three of whom are women. The Grandparents serve in Head Start centers, neonatal and pediatric wards in hospitals, public schools and other children's facilities. In addition, the Portland Foster Grandparent Program is distinguished by its in-home placements with high-risk families, including those headed by teenage mothers. Through their visits, Grandparents, many of whom have raised children on their own, help the girls develop parenting and life skills and relieve isolation and stress.

The program's annual budget is $450,000, approximately 70 percent of which comes from the federal government. The balance comes from the state, local school district, United Way, and various smaller sources.

The Minnesota Senior Companion Program is based in Minneapolis and operated by Lutheran Social Services. The largest Senior Companion program in the country, its participants initially worked exclusively in long-term care facilities, but most activity today is community-based. Companions provide person-to-person support, serving homebound elderly persons, victims of Alzheimer's disease, families in need of respite care, and AIDS patients. In addition, special initiatives match Companions who are veterans with older veterans in need of support, and Companions who are recovering substance abusers with seniors struggling with alcoholism and drug problems. Typically, volunteers provide clients with companionship, help with light household duties, provide transportation to medical appointments, prepare meals, and perform various other daily tasks.

The budget for the Minnesota initiative was $921,000 for the most recent fiscal year, of which $400,000 came from the federal government; the balance was from the state of

Minnesota and from agencies receiving the service of Senior Companions. Eighty percent of Companions in the local effort are women, and the average age is 70.

The Orlando Community Service Employment Program (CSEP) is funded via Title V of the Older Americans Act, the Senior Community Service Employment Program. It is sponsored by AARP, one of 10 national organizations that administer Title V for the U.S. Department of Labor. The Orlando effort serves 145 people, with an annual budget of $875,000.

These individuals are placed in nonprofit and government "host" organizations, ranging in Orlando from the Salvation Army to the state employment agencies. For the most part, participants do support service work--typing, answering phones, changing light bulbs, and delivering meals on wheels--but some are involved in more challenging tasks. For example, one enrollee is a warehouse supervisor over prisoners taking part in a work release program.

The emphasis in the Orlando program is on placing participants in unsubsidized jobs, and it is the most successful local initiative in the AARP network on this score. The Orlando program's 60 percent placement rate dwarfs a national rate, across sponsors, of 22 percent. Staff and participants attribute the program's success to stressing repeatedly and emphatically the goal of transitioning enrollees into unsubsidized work and accompanying this message with a combination of job clubs, job search seminars and vigorous job development efforts by program staff.

The Delta Service Corps was established with funding from the former Commission on National and Community Service (now part of the Corporation for National and Community Service) under its special Subtitle D program supporting potential models for national service. The Corps received 1992/93 funding of $3.4 million and 1993/94 funding of $5.1 million. The Delta Corps places full- and part-time volunteers in local service organizations dealing with education, public safety, human services, and the environment. Administered by the Arkansas Office of Volunteerism, it operates in the rural, desperately poor Mississippi Delta counties of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. At present, the Corps has 273 participants evenly divided among the three states; they receive a stipend of $4.41 per hour plus limited health and insurance benefits. The program is open to individuals of any income level.

One-quarter of participants in the Delta Service Corps are older adults. Seniors work part time, usually between 10 and 20 hours per week, at their host site and serve as part of intergenerational teams that convene biweekly and periodically undertake signature projects. Seniors participate in a range of activities, including helping staff a food pantry for homeless and impoverished families, delivering meals on wheels, performing medical outreach to diabetes patients, conducting classes at a senior center, and tutoring at an early childhood development program. One Corps project, sponsored by the Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation, matches older farmer/mentors with youth interested in agricultural careers, thus teaching them agricultural methods as well as life skills.

The Delta Corps is the second largest of the former Commission's demonstration projects (after Boston's City Year program), and the largest of the five efforts funded under Subtitle D that involve seniors and youth in the same program.

Springfield, Massachusetts' Corporation for Public Management Mentor Program is part of the Linking Lifetimes initiative. It is also heir to an innovative but now defunct program, The Work Connection, created by a Boston area chapter of the International Union of Electrical Workers and focused on pairing older adults from blue-collar backgrounds with youth in trouble with the justice system. In this program, elder mentors (55 and up) help the young people find employment. Because most of the seniors have weathered hard lives themselves, often including bouts with unemployment, alcoholism and divorce, they possess a special sensitivity to what youth face and are able to use their personal experiences as a source of credibility. In the words of one staff member, these mentors are "like walking life-skills curricula."

Currently, the CPM mentoring program, created by former staff members of The Work Connection, involves 30 mentors: 20 working with adjudicated youth, five engaged in a program for young unwed fathers, and five serving youth through a public housing-based program. The mentors receive a flat $100 per month stipend (plus reimbursement for expenses), and are expected to put in approximately five to ten hours each week. The total program budget is $177,000, covered primarily through funding by the state division of youth services and the city public housing authority.

SENIORS IN SERVICE:

JIM KUKAS, MINNESOTA SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Jim Kukas is a 65-year-old white man who lives in Minneapolis. Divorced, a retired cab driver and prison guard, he participates in the Senior Companion Program and visits frail seniors in an effort to preserve their independent living.

If I can make them happy, laugh a little bit, I'll try to do it. If I'm sittin' there, waiting for an elevator with Helen, my 95-year-old lady, and somebody happens to walk by and says, "Hello, how you doin'?," I'll say, "Good! We just got back from Vegas!" Helen thinks that's so funny. "You fool," she'll say. We argue a lot about baseball. She doesn't like Kirby Puckett, but we're both Twins fans.

I think I'm more aware of the needs of other people now, having been a Companion--probably more understanding. To me, it's really sad how people deteriorate, not only their body, their mind, too. But I think I'd rather work with elderly people than children--I had four kids of my own--that was enough! Seriously, I figured--I'm old, they're old--we should be able to find something in common.

When you're young, you always want to get older, look forward to turning 21. And when you get to be 40, middle-aged, you don't mind that too much. But when you get to be a senior citizen, it can be a little shocking. When I got to be 65, and I picked up the paper and saw a headline, "Elderly Person Mugged and Robbed, Age 65," that struck me--I'm elderly! Elderly to me meant you're decrepid, a really beat-up person. It struck me funny, but I laughed it off--as I limped across the room!

I stopped full-time work at 62. But I always kept busy helping other people who were getting up in age and needed help. I still do. Other than the program here, I have some people that I help out regular and so on. You know somebody for 40, 50 years and they need help, you kinda try and help them out.

Sometimes, it gets a little hectic, but you find time. Our visits as Senior Companions are usually four hours, but you can't always sit with someone for that long. It depends on the condition they're in. There's one lady who is in a wheelchair, and I'll take her out and wheel her around, but there's only so long you can walk, especially if the weather is chilly.

I was just out for a while (with an illness) and I missed the people I'm working with. I telephoned them a lot, spent a lot of time on the phone with them. When they're sick and ill, sometimes fighting depression, a call helps. And when I came back, I didn't feel too out of touch, everybody seemed anxious to get going again.

A lot of people are pretty isolated. Take Eleanor. She doesn't have anybody. Her sister lives in Wisconsin, so she don't get here often. Other than her social worker and her nurse, I'm her only contact. I do her grocery shopping, take her to the doctor, whatever she needs doing we do. Helen is alone too, she's never been married, has no children. She'll be 96 in September. She's got one great-uncle--I mean great-nephew (GREAT UNCLE--he'd be about 300 now!), but that's it.

She's too frail to go to the doctor's by herself and last week, I took her. We had to wait quite a while there. She's very frail, has a hard time sitting, and we're there two hours, seeing other people coming in and out. I started talking kind of loud about it; I didn't stomp on anybody or anything like that, but I kinda let it be known that this lady is 95 years old and gets awful sore sittin' in a wheelchair that long. That seemed to help, and they realized they must have forgotten her.

It doesn't matter to me whether it's a woman or a man that I visit. For a while, I had all women, and I used to get kidded about that at the monthly Companion meetings. If I ever get a companion, I want a female one--don't send some old man to my house! I'm serious about that. I always prefer ladies' companionship. I'm old enough to remember when people would gripe if they put a lady on a man's job, but that never bothered me. I welcomed it, they were more interesting.

I done a lot of things when I was working. I drove a cab and was a supervisor for United Cab Company before it went belly up. My last, most meaningful, job was as a prison guard here at the state prison in Stillwater. I was there about five years. And it taught me a lot that helps as a Senior Companion. I know it sounds crazy, but I took on a lot of compassion from being at Stillwater. I actually felt sorry for a lot of inmates out there. And if you don't have feeling for somebody else, you can't do this job [as a companion]. I'm not a goody-goody boy or anything like that. I'm doin' this a lot for myself.

I guess it's kind of corny, but I feel good if I can help somebody else. I don't know, you read in the papers about all the greed that's going on, everybody's trying to grab a buck for themselves. I know darn well that I could be working somewhere making a fairly decent salary--I get job offers a lot now that I'm a senior citizen and carry my own insurance--but I'd rather do this.

Partly, it's because of the independence. The flexibility. I don't punch a clock. It's also fun. There are a lot of laughs in it too--they're laughin' at me all the time!! And you get close to the other Companions. Take Cy, he has been a Companion for 15 years. He's 80, and a close friend. Although I'm jealous, too: he's still got a full head of hair!

IV. LESSONS PAST AND PRESENT

Thirty years ago, the architects of Kennedy's National Service Corps had little to go on in charting how seniors might become engaged in national service. Today, due to established efforts like the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and Senior Community Service Employment programs, senior service is no longer an untested phenomenon. And a new round of publicly and privately funded demonstration projects--Delta Service Corps and other Commission on National and Community Service-funded models from the public side; Linking Lifetimes and a scattering of other foundation-funded demonstrations from the private side--have further added to the available knowledge.

NINE LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

An examination of the lessons from such efforts provides a valuable perspective on the promise, limitations and future directions of national and community service involving seniors. In many respects, these lessons are encouraging. Overall, however, they suggest that a substantial gap continues to exist between potential and practice.

1. Seniors Can Provide Essential Community Service

At the most basic level, a look at these efforts shows that senior service is feasible. They demonstrate, in sustained and enduring fashion, that older Americans will come forward in the tens of thousands to engage in challenging service opportunities requiring a substantial commitment. As already stated, more than 100,000 seniors (most of them low-income) are currently engaged--primarily through the Senior Companion, Foster Grandparent and Senior Community Service Employment programs, but also through smaller programs, such as VISTA, Peace Corps, and projects initiated at the state and local levels.

The best established area of work for seniors is in caring for children and youth--through the Foster Grandparent Program--and for frail older adults--through the Senior Companion Program. Since 1975, for example, 35 studies have been conducted of the Senior Companion Program; these consistently indicate that the effort is addressing a real community need and doing so effectively. Two years after the creation of the program, research of all existing projects, conducted by Booz, Allen and Hamilton, concluded that Senior Companions "have an important impact on alleviating the loneliness of the adults they serve, increasing their level of activity, and meeting other basic needs" and that the Companions "perform a service that would not be available to needy adults if the program did not exist."[1]

A decade later, the Research Triangle Institute conducted a three-year, controlled evaluation of the Homebound Elderly Demonstration Program, concluding in their final report that Companions serve a truly needy population, that their services "supplement and augment" those already being provided "rather than displacing them," and that these services are

"flexible, individually targeted, able to respond to clients' needs, and include a range and variety of services that other available programs do not provide."[2]

A 1988 study by Sociometrics, Inc. examining the effectiveness of Senior Companions in providing one-to-one assistance to care recipients living in the same residences as their family caregivers found evidence of benefits to clients and their families. Clients reported "being cheered up, feeling less lonely, feeling better about self, having better health" while family caregivers perceived "reductions in stress, feelings of being alone, family tension and financial burden."[3]

In 1991, the Alzheimer's Association studied a demonstration program bringing together Senior Companions and Alzheimer's sufferers, concluding that the seniors were "an effective resource for respite care," and were capable of communicating effectively and improving the quality of life for clients. In addition, the families that received the assistance described "overwhelming satisfaction" with the service provided.[4]

A review of the literature on Foster Grandparents paints a similar portrait. Over the past three decades, 31 studies have been conducted on the program. A seven-year study of the Detroit-area Foster Grandparent Program, conducted by the Merrill-Palmer Institute and Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology, found that "forming intense, personal bonds with their individual foster grandchildren was easy and natural for most of the elders in the project, and that the children also soon 'adopted' them as grandparents." The study further states that "foster grandparenting had a very positive impact on the children's development in both intellectual and social areas."[5]

Other studies examining various aspects of the program echo this endorsement. Booz and Allen examined 20 percent of the programs operating in this country, finding the program highly cost-effective with a net excess of quantifiable benefits over costs of more than $1.5 million.[6] Other researchers have found Foster Grandparent projects producing similarly positive effects on both elders and children in a variety of other settings, including a day care center, a juvenile correctional facility, and a family support program for teenage parents.[7]

Research on a state-funded teenage parenting project in New Jersey that placed Foster Grandparents in homes where child abuse or neglect was suspected found that the seniors often became special friends to members of the family, provided ongoing support, acted as role models for the children's parents, and produced significant improvements in the children's family environments and in the life satisfaction and morale of the elders.[8]

P/PV's own examination of a set of Foster Grandparent and other programs involving older adults as mentors to at-risk youth concluded that the seniors were effective in forming significant relationships with teenage mothers, youth in trouble with the juvenile justice system, and middle school students in danger of dropping out. This study states that a majority of elders were able to form two types of relationships with youth: primary relationships, "characterized by attachments approximating kinship, great intimacy and a willingness

on the part of elders to take on the youth's full range of problems and emotions," and secondary relationships, in which "elders served as helpful, friendly neighbors, focusing on positive reinforcement but maintaining more emotional distance." The study also identified benefits to the youth, including improvement in the quality of their day-to-day lives, and an enhanced sense of competence.[9]

Given the tenor of these findings, it is not surprising that research also seems to indicate high levels of satisfaction on the part of agencies using seniors in these high-intensity service efforts. One study of the Foster Grandparent Program, for example, shows that Head Start staff at centers using a variety of volunteers find Foster Grandparents significantly more committed, reliable, useful and enthusiastic than other volunteers.[10] Another study of the program in New York found that over 70 percent of site staff believed Foster Grandparents were more reliable than other volunteers.[11]

A third study, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor, suggests that public and nonprofit host agencies for the Senior Community Service Employment Program also are satisfied with the labor of senior participants. This examination reminds that while research on the service rendered by Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions is far more extensive, important contributions are likely occurring under the auspices of this effort as well.[12]

Around the country, many Title V enrollees perform functions comparable to those of Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions. They also play an essential part in the operation of national efforts like the Meals on Wheels program. One of the experts interviewed--Daniel Thursz, president of the National Council on the Aging, a Title V sponsor--argues that the Meals on Wheels program would be crippled without the contributions of these enrollees. The program also places thousands of seniors in clerical, reception, janitorial, and support functions at community agencies facing severe budgetary constraints, whose operations depend on the help of Title V participants. At the same time, many program participants are now, and have been at various times in the past, involved in a variety of innovative projects ranging from mentoring youth in a summer employment program to implementing alternative energy demonstrations.

One particularly striking example of the innovative service potential of Title V can be found in the Orlando Community Service Employment Program, one of the sites visited during the research phase of this study. Although the official ethos of the program is oriented toward employment and away from service (in the words of long-time director Calvin Miller, his program "is about making taxpayers, not tax-users!"), all of the program staff, including Miller, are Title V enrollees. They work together 20 hours a week to find jobs for other low-income seniors in the community while supporting themselves through the program's stipend. The staff form a tightly knit community, and have been remarkably effective in placing other enrollees. The 60 percent placement rate in Orlando is the highest of any AARP-sponsored initiative, and AARP maintains the highest placement rate of any of the 10 national Title V sponsors.

The Orlando program and the exemplary sites visited as part of researching this study help illustrate the nature of senior contributions, filling out the picture presented through the evaluations.

A number of the programs revealed seniors as able to perform important functions that staff simply did not have the time--nor the agency money--to provide. These seniors managed to fill in the gaps, flexibly performing what might be called staff extension roles, attending to special needs, and providing services often impossible for overwhelmed teachers, social workers and health care personnel.

The complementary role between seniors and staff is evident also in an 18-site demonstration project involving collaboration between the Visiting Nurse Association of America and the Senior Companion Program. Visiting Nurses working in the homes of clients can concentrate on providing basic nursing care, nutrition counseling, and physical or speech therapy, while Senior Companions provide emotional support and help clients with the daily tasks of living.[13] Similarly, in the CPM Mentor program, older adults help clients keep medical appointments, make scheduled job interviews, complete paperwork, attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and accomplish a variety of small but essential functions--allowing staff to focus on case management.[14]

A related attribute the seniors bring to these situations is adequate time. A staff person at Jewish Family Services in Minneapolis, which uses Senior Companions as well as volunteers of other ages, explains, "When working with older clients, you need someone not in a rush, someone willing to take the time to listen." She adds that one of the greatest contributions of the Companions is in stemming the loneliness of the frail and homebound, explaining, "You don't need a $20 an hour social worker to combat loneliness."

In a complementary vein, Foster Grandparent Cherry Hendrix compares her current responsibilities with those she had when working as an aide in the Portland Public Schools, noting that she now has the time to really listen to the children. Although she tutors the young people, her most significant role is to serve as a calming and nurturing influence, to make the young people feel noticed and heard, to better enable them to deal with the personal and social upheaval that so often impedes education.

This type of time goes hand in hand with another quality: perspective. Desi Gill is a retired factory worker from Chicago who returned to his native Marvel, Arkansas, to inherit his parents' farm. Through the Delta Service Corps, he works with early adolescents at the Boys-Girls-Adult Center, a community-based organization in Marvel. Desi describes the work as "a golden opportunity to do some of the things you would have liked to do better as a parent." He said this is possible because "You have become more humble, more gentle, you listen to the children, what they have to say . . . When my children were coming along, many times I couldn't take time to listen to them, to hear the things they wanted to say to me."

Another senior, a woman mentoring in the CPM program, explains: "I feel very different now than I did 20 years ago. I often reflect on this and regret that I didn't have more of these attitudes when I became a parent. It's a change toward more acceptance, more respect." Her comments, and those of Desi Gill, recall J.R. Doyle's description of a "natural, philosophical" impulse welling up in him in retirement--a sense of tolerance, a willingness to listen, and a desire to give something back to society.

Seniors also bring their life experience to service assignments. At The Work Connection, an initiative outside Boston that inspired the Linking Lifetimes demonstration, seniors with extensive experience in the blue-collar job world work with youthful offenders to find private-sector employment, imparting knowledge about how to navigate job networks, succeed in interviews and stay employed. One of the seniors interviewed, an immigrant who never finished school but who maintained steady employment as a factory worker and bus driver, said, "I don't have an education, but I have an education--what I went through in life, in real life--and that's what I teach them." In another example, Foster Grandparents in Portland, Maine, many of whom have raised multiple children on their own, work with the young mothers from their base of parenting experience, steering them toward more nurturing practices and helping them deal with the accumulation of frustrations that often leads to child abuse.

Also evident among participants across sites were the qualities of reliability and stability. Program staff emphasized that seniors tend to come to service assignments with a well-developed work ethic and decades of experience handling the requirements of employment. They are disciplined--they show up on time and know what's expected in a workplace setting.

There are important benefits in the intensive structure of the programs as well. Seniors are required to show up five days a week, week in and week out. As a result, transaction costs are minimized. As one staff member explained, it takes far less supervisory effort to work with one person serving 20 hours a week, than five individuals each working four hours--or 10 putting in two hours apiece. And the seniors tend to stay for long periods of time, often averaging five years or more.

The reliability and stability of the seniors, as well as the perspective and other qualities they bring with them, often can radiate beyond their own work, actually influencing the climate of the institution. For example, Cherry Hendrix's influence is felt not only within the classroom, but throughout the Woodlawn Elementary School. When third-graders file into the lunchroom they are met at the front of the line by Ms. Hendrix, who gives each one an enveloping hug along with his or her eating utensils. Teachers report that this kind of contact has an important influence on the young people and can subtly shift the entire school in a more caring direction.

On the opposite side of the country, a similar influence is evident in another elementary school, through another Foster Grandparent program. At Reiche Elementary School in

Portland, Maine, the school's eight Foster Grandparents are stationed in the library, art room, cafeteria, and classrooms. They dramatically increase the amount of personal attention available to students, and contribute to making Reiche, in the words of the school guidance counselor, "more like a family."

The institutional influence of the seniors is sometimes advanced through direct advocacy. One study of Senior Companions describes them as vital "advocacy links between families and the social and health service system," while a study of Foster Grandparents finds that "one of the most interesting transformations that takes place in these programs is the development of the elders into powerful advocates as they get to know the young people better, come to understand their circumstances, and begin to believe deeply in them."

The presence of seniors can strengthen not only the internal sense of community described at schools like Woodlawn and Reiche, but ties between the institutions and the surrounding community. For example, Cherry Hendrix has lived for nearly half a century in the lower-income and working-class African-American neighborhood where Woodlawn is located. Not long ago, it was a neighborhood characterized by a strong sense of responsibility and connection; today, transformed by crime, it is a place where older people like Ms. Hendrix remain, for the most part, barricaded in their homes, fearful of walking on the streets. As a result, the web of this neighborhood and community has been severely weakened.

Through her interaction with the children at the elementary school, however, some elements of community have been rewoven for Cherry Hendrix. It is now common for the 70-year-old woman to hear, "Grandma Cherry, Grandma Cherry," on the way to church or while shopping at the grocery store. The students who call after her are often with their parents, and she has become acquainted with a number of these families.

Similarly, the work of Senior Companions mirrors the kinds of community visiting that used to be common in most American neighborhoods. In this way, the program helps rebuild social infrastructure in ways that go beyond simply providing services.

2. Older Americans Can Benefit Through Serving

In addition to evidence that seniors can contribute in important ways through service, there are indications that the seniors greatly benefit themselves by serving. In fact, the engine driving senior service may well be less airy altruism than a strong and straightforward desire for structure, purpose, affiliation, growth, and meaning.

Evidence of psychological and social benefits to seniors can be found in a series of research studies on existing programs. A five-year examination of Senior Companions by SRA Technologies, completed in 1985, reports that participating Companions showed improvement in mental health functioning; no such significant changes were observed among individuals on the program's waiting list. The study concludes that "a strong association

[exists] between participation as a volunteer in SCP and positive functioning, and strongly suggests that these positive effects are the result of participation in SCP."[15]

Research on benefits to Foster Grandparents has produced comparable findings. A three-year study released in 1983, which included 14 projects and 471 respondents and compared Foster Grandparents with seniors on the waiting list to become Foster Grandparents, found that participants' mental health and social resources improved over the three years, while those on the waiting list declined in these areas. Among the study's other findings: 71 percent of the Foster Grandparents reported they "almost never" felt lonely, compared with 45 percent of the waiting list group. Also, 83 percent of participants reported being "more satisfied" with their life, compared with 52 percent of those waiting to become Foster Grandparents.[16]

These findings are reinforced by yet another study, conducted by Professor Rosalind Saltz of Michigan State University. Her examination, which focused on programs in Michigan, indicates an array of benefits for seniors, including increased self-esteem, renewed feelings of health and vigor, and new and satisfying social relationships with peers--as well as greater financial security and satisfaction with the direction of their lives.[17]

While these and other studies provide an overall sense that seniors derive important benefits from participation, observation of programs in action and interviews with participants and staff help identify the specific nature of these benefits.

One clear benefit, in programs engaging seniors living below the poverty line, is financial in nature. For individuals living on extremely limited incomes, the senior stipend is used for food, medicine, and other essentials. For many others, it permits small indulgences; one senior interviewed explained that receiving a stipend meant being able to go out to a restaurant once a month. For still others, it provides additional resources to enhance the service contribution. For example, J.R. Doyle uses his stipend to buy dinner for his team as an extra incentive to attend meetings.

Throughout the interviews, seniors expressed gratitude for a structure in their lives--or, as many put it, "something to get up for in the morning". Most said that the most fulfilling assignments were those in which they were busiest and most fully engaged. In fact, a recurring concern of program managers is some participants' tendency to work too hard, to show up despite hazardous weather conditions or to keep going even when illness would seem to dictate a leave of absence. In an extreme case, a Foster Grandparent at a Head Start center in Portland, Oregon, continued to work despite heart problems, until she finally had to be wheeled out of the center on a stretcher. As she was being removed from the building she begged her supervisor to allow her to return to the center, pleading "This is my whole life." After recovering from heart surgery, she did resume her work.

In addition to structure, the programs provide acquaintanceship and affiliation, not only with clients and staff, but with other seniors engaged in service. At Reiche Elementary School,

all eight Foster Grandparents eat lunch together daily. Although only one member of the group is male and all are white, they are diverse in other ways: among its members are a college-educated former book editor and a low-income mother of 13.

When one of the Reiche seniors developed Alzheimer's disease in 1991, the other seven banded together to enable her to continue to serve, which she did until late 1993. They helped her get to and from work and provided assistance and support during the work day. At the Orlando CSEP program, the 16 senior enrollees who work in the central office have also forged a community of service, sharing offices (three or four to a room), conducting joint seminars, and contributing in a variety of ways to finding other elders jobs.

The Delta Service Corps provides two levels for participants to build bonds. The most dramatic is the Corps' intensive, weeklong, residential training session, described by one participant as "a revival . . . the glue that binds the program together." Ties forged during the training are nurtured through a crew structure that brings together teams of older and younger participants on a weekly basis and includes joint signature projects conducted in the county where each crew is deployed.

In addition to affiliation and purpose, senior service programs also provide a sense of meaning for participants, the sense of contributing to something larger. J.R. Doyle describes the Delta Corps as "a kind of ministry . . . a civilian ministry." His colleague in the Corps, Desi Gill, concurs; Gill says there is a strong spiritual component in this program that satisfies "the longing for communion with another person." A Foster Grandparent in Maine describes the important sense of "fellowship" she derives from being in the program. Like J.R. Doyle, a number of participants report having given up higher-paying part-time employment positions in search of more fulfilling opportunities.

These efforts also present opportunities for personal growth. One of the most important sources of this growth is diversity, an objective that is highly prized in national service. While programs like City Year have been lauded for bringing economically and ethnically diverse youth together to serve side by side, however, less attention has been accorded the benefits of generational diversity. Interviews and observations suggest that opportunities for seniors to serve alongside youth, as provided in Delta Service Corps, contribute greatly to intergenerational understanding.

Another example of the growth potential inherent in diverse service settings can be seen in J.R. Doyle's account of friendship with Don Harding, the African-American senior from New Orleans who passed away while serving in the Delta Corps. For J.R.--who comes from the largely white Ozarks--volunteerism afforded his first opportunity for a close relationship with someone of a different race--and changed his outlook in the process.

The account of Harding's death also reminds that participating in senior service can require elders to deal with difficult emotional experiences. Many Senior Companions confront the death of clients, which in turn forces them to face their own mortality. Other situations can

also be emotionally wrenching. One Companion in Minneapolis, Yakov Grichener, described having to handle his own sense of humiliation when a client he was caring for became incontinent in the tool department of a local Sears store.

While some of the growth that occurs in these programs is forged in wrestling with humiliation and loss, most occurs through more pleasant and reciprocal forms of exchange. This is illustrated by Yakov's relationship with Harry Dychel, a retired postal worker who is legally blind. Harry helps Yakov, an immigrant from Moldavia in the former Soviet Union, to develop his English skills; in return, Yakov drives him to appointments, helps him get exercise, and keeps him company. Each is convinced he is the helper and the other the helpee--and each thrives on the strong sense of reciprocity in the relationship.

3. Low-Income Seniors Can Play an Important Role in Service

Because the roots of senior service in America are in the mid-60s' War on Poverty, efforts have primarily targeted low-income seniors. This group includes those seniors most likely to be overlooked and undervalued by virtue of race and education levels. Programs in operation to date have demonstrated that despite their disadvantages, these seniors can make substantial contributions to their communities and benefit themselves in the process. This is a remarkable social policy achievement.

A number of studies indicate that low-income seniors, by virtue of the obstacles they've faced, are in fact particularly well positioned to reach young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. One study suggests that these individuals have special credibility with teenage mothers, youthful offenders and potential dropouts. Having weathered hard times and emerged intact, many low-income senior mentors are able to use their life experiences as effective teaching tools in mentoring youth.

In addition, matching low-income seniors with disadvantaged individuals from the same neighborhood, particularly through the vehicle of a neighborhood-based organization (as done with Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions), can give an effort a strong cast as community self-help.

4. Government Can Help Enable Senior Service

The current roster of service programs adds up to more than a few promising demonstration projects and local initiatives. These programs exist on a national scale: the Foster Grandparent Program involves 23,000 volunteers in 275 projects throughout the country. The Senior Companion Program involves another 12,000 in 182 projects. The Senior Community Service Employment Program engages 65,000 seniors across all 50 states. Peace Corps, VISTA and other initiatives, such as Georgia's Peach Corps, add to these numbers. At any given moment, more than 100,000 seniors are involved in government-funded, high-intensity community service projects spanning the country. This activity is responsible for at least 100 million hours of annual community service.

In terms of policy, the combination of efforts demonstrates the important enabling role government can play in the service arena. During 1993 debates over the National Service Trust Act, some lawmakers opposed to the bill argued that government involvement was unnecessary and contrary to the spirit of voluntarism. One opponent argued that calamities like the Mississippi River floods "demonstrated that the spirit of volunteerism is alive and well in the United States"--without government involvement.[18]

The senior community service programs show how the government can provide the essential and ongoing infrastructure to stimulate, support and sustain service efforts--without suffocating civic spirit and while permitting considerable local control. They simultaneously reveal the role public policy can play in service when there is no life-threatening disaster to galvanize citizen efforts. The government's particular niche appears to be in high-intensity efforts, distinct from volunteer assignments generated by the charitable sector and involving commitments in the neighborhood of two to four hours a week.

The value of the government's role is also evident in its institution-building capacity. The senior service initiatives constructed since the 1960s--especially the Foster Grandparent Program--are among the most notable accomplishments of social policy from that era. They are much larger than the better-known Peace Corps and VISTA programs; they have outlasted many of the other voluntary programs of that period, such as the Teacher Corps; and they anticipated in their focus on caregiving a crisis in our society that would not be fully felt for two decades. All the while, these efforts have proven politically resilient, surviving seven administrations, Democratic and Republican alike, and building bipartisan support along the way.

Indeed, the nearly 100,000 senior service slots that currently exist is the equivalent--albeit the half-time equivalent--of the ideal number of national service slots President Clinton envisioned being ultimately created through AmeriCorps. It is also five times the number of slots in AmeriCorps during its first year.

5. Implementation is Crucial

Effective senior service requires sturdy infrastructure, not only at the policy level (as reflected in the government's ongoing enabling role), but at the program level as well. The importance of strong program implementation and practices is an overarching lesson of the past three decades' experience in this arena. While altruism is important to the initial impetus to serve, it cannot be relied on to sustain a program.

As sociologist Susan Chambre argues in her book *Good Deeds in Old Age*, "Once a person begins to volunteer, a desire to do 'good deeds' declines and the nature of the volunteer job itself becomes more and more important."[19] Danzig and Szanton echo this point in their discussion of national service, stating that the most important and best-established lessons learned from the service programs of the past quarter century are that their impact depends on implementation issues, such as the quality and quantity of supervision and the match

between participants' interest and their assignments.[20] Three decades of research and observation around effective practices for senior service efforts are described briefly in the following sections.

Compelling Work: Seniors want to do work that fills a compelling and evident need, one that they can meet and that fits their interests. This does not necessarily mean performing complicated tasks. Rather, it means assignments contributing directly to the mission of the sponsoring organization or to the lives of needy individuals. Demanding work, even work that involves heartbreak and defeat, is greatly preferred to peripheral assignments.

Personal Growth: When we think about learning and growth through service, we tend to focus on the young. But seniors also grow through the service experience, and programs that promote their development, growth and learning are likely to reap rewards of superior performance and longevity of involvement. Promoting growth means incorporating opportunities for seniors to reflect, and offering them feedback and training to help them develop skills. At another level, opportunities for vertical mobility into progressively more challenging roles and assignments--essentially a service career ladder--should be promoted. This will allow seniors to experience various levels and types of service.

Supportive Context: Seniors are most productive in organizations that are adept at teamwork and cooperation, and experienced at integrating the efforts of volunteers. This process can also be fortified by bringing seniors together in regular sessions to support each other, deal with the many challenges of serious service assignments, and help solve problems jointly. Programs can provide additional encouragement by recognizing the contributions of the seniors and providing opportunities for them to identify with the host agency's mission and staff.

Skilled Supervision: A skilled and supportive site supervisor who can facilitate senior involvement is essential, but the quality of service program staff who support the volunteers may be even more important. These individuals must provide the follow-up to make sure seniors are engaged in serious service, help bridge communication gaps between volunteers and site personnel, and help the site develop its capacity to use the seniors fully. They also can be an important source of social support for the volunteers. In fact, ties between program staff and participants are sometimes so strong that departure of staff is followed by an exodus of volunteers.

Social Interaction: As mentioned earlier, providing mutual support groups is one way to stimulate the social interaction and acquaintanceship that seniors desire in service programs; however, there are many others. Some programs offer this type of interaction directly through organization of the work--enabling the accomplishment of work in partnerships with other participants or through a team structure. At sites where numerous seniors are assigned, interaction occurs informally throughout the workday. Another vehicle for building bonds is instituting pre-service and ongoing training sessions that bring together seniors serving across several sites.

Recruitment: Among the barriers that must be overcome in recruiting seniors for service programs is programs' tendency to undervalue the potential contributions of seniors. In addition, many seniors undervalue their own attributes. Evidence indicates that the most effective recruiters are seniors already involved in the service process. These individuals can describe their own initial reservations and experience, provide specific examples of the tasks involved, offer credibility to the program, and help screen for the types of individuals willing to make a substantial commitment. But regardless of whether recruitment is done using seniors or agency staff, patience and persistence are necessary, both to identify potential recruits and convince them of their value to the program.

Logistical Support: The presence of support services designed to remove logistical barriers and reduce the transaction costs of serving appears crucial. Support for transportation costs is particularly important when seniors work or live in neighborhoods where safety is a concern or it is difficult to get around due to weather or distance. The provision of meals is a further incentive to participation, and offering health exams can help participants discover illnesses that, if undetected, might impair or cut short their service tenure.

Stipending and Compensation: Compensation is another key program feature enabling many low-income individuals to serve, covering costs associated with volunteering and providing enough income support to free some participants from having to take a less fulfilling, wage-paying position. In many cases, the stipend serves as an incentive for participation and provides seniors additional resources with which to further their service mission.

The strategies and lessons outlined are by no means exhaustive, and more knowledge about effective implementation must be developed. Nevertheless, they underscore the point that program practice is important, and that a core set of key elements must be present in any responsible senior service effort.

6. Senior Service is Not Cheap

An overarching lesson from the experience of senior voluntarism is that effective, responsible programming costs money. It is not practical to simply call for participants, parcel them out, and hope for the best. Fischer and Schaefer, surveying the literature on senior voluntarism in *Older Volunteers: A Guide to Research and Practice*, conclude that "there are substantial costs in running volunteer programs," and "volunteers are not 'cheap'." They go on to underscore the essential importance of adequate resources for training, supervision, recruitment, transportation, and other support services in the delivery of volunteer initiatives.[21]

These findings, reflective not only of prevailing opinion on senior voluntarism, but on volunteering in general, are even more emphatic in the case of national service. Examining a variety of service models, including scenarios involving seniors, Danzig and Szanton advise that the costs "of operating a successful national service program will be high," due in part to the importance of sturdy implementation and infrastructure.[22] Indeed, when provision of a

stipend--widely accepted practice in national service programs, which generally require a substantial commitment from participants--is taken into account, these efforts are clearly more expensive than less intensive, uncompensated volunteer efforts.

The confluence of opinion that senior service cannot be done on the cheap leaves many specifics unanswered. How much in the way of resources is required to effectively deliver senior service? Does the cost vary by type of program? Is senior service really worth it when these expenses are factored in? Unfortunately, much of the information that might provide answers to these important questions is not readily available. It remains difficult to get reliable and comprehensive data about cost--a reminder of the incipient nature of analysis in much of this field.

These limitations notwithstanding, one can derive partial responses to some key cost questions by looking at available data on the three national programs featured in this study. Further amplification can be gained from examining cost figures from the five local sites visited as part of this report. (The tables in Appendix A present background data from the national and local programs studied for this analysis.)

Annual federal expenditure to the Foster Grandparent Program is $64.8 million ($3,508 per slot); to the Senior Companion Program, $29 million ($3,723 per slot); and to the Senior Community Service Employment Program, $390 million ($6,053 per slot). The total annual federal outlay for these programs amounts to $483.8 million supporting 90,313 slots--a federal cost per participant slot of $5,357. In addition, these programs leverage another $115.7 million in non-federal resources for an additional 4,860 slots, bringing the average cost per slot to $6,299.

From the perspective of extending the reach of federal support, it is significant that the Foster Grandparent program receives $29.2 million in other funding (equivalent to 45 percent of its federal funding) and Senior Companions receives $16.8 million in other funding (equal to 57 percent of its federal funding). Non-federal support for the Title V program is less substantial, being primarily in-kind supervisory services provided by host agencies.

Returning to costs, examination of the components of federally funded programs reveals that in all three cases, approximately 70 percent of the federal allocation goes toward direct compensation of participants. In the Foster Grandparents Program, that figure is 71 percent ($2,548 of $3,508); in the Senior Companion Program, it is 68 percent ($2,548 of $3,723); and in Title V, it is 73 percent ($4,420 of $6,053). The difference is attributable to the varying compensation strategies employed by the programs: as already stated, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions receive $2.45 an hour, while Title V participants average $4.25.

When non-federal support is added to these calculations, compensation proportions drop to 55 percent for Foster Grandparents ($2,548 of $4,599), 59 percent for Senior Companions

($2,548 of $4,316), and 61 percent for Title V ($4,420 of $7,162, including in-kind support).

The suggestion that compensation is proportionally the biggest cost of these programs is further borne out by the five local case studies. Direct compensation amounts to slightly more than half the total cost of the Portland Foster Grandparent (54%), Minnesota Senior Companion (59%), and Delta Service Corps (52%) programs. It accounts for over one-third of costs in the Corporation for Public Management program (34%), and represents the vast majority of expenses for the Orlando CSEP program (85%).

The programs employ a wide variety of compensation strategies. By legislative mandate, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions receive a $2.45 stipend, which is both decoupled from and below the prevailing minimum wage. This stipend does not affect eligibility for Social Security, SSI, housing subsidies, medical assistance, food stamps, fuel assistance or veterans pensions, and it is exempted from all taxes, including FICA, federal income tax, and state tax. As a result of these special conditions, the Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion stipends result in net pay that is effectively higher than is at first evident.

In Title V programs and the Delta Corps, compensation is roughly pegged to the minimum wage. These stipends are taxable and affect a variety of entitlements and subsidies, including Social Security, SSI, medical assistance and veterans pensions.

In all these programs, seniors are paid according to hours worked--meaning 20 hours per week in the three national programs and between 9 and 20 hours in the Delta Corps. The CPM Mentor program employs a different strategy: the program pays seniors a flat $132 per month in the expectation that they will put in 25 hours of work over that period--an arrangement that translates to 5.75 hours per week at $5.30 per hour. This sum is taxable and affects benefit eligibility.

Beyond their substantial commitment to compensation, the programs studied vary widely in administrative and supervisory costs, ranging from 18 percent of compensation costs in the Orlando CSEP program to 136 percent of compensation costs in the CPM Mentor program. The Minnesota SCP program dedicates the equivalent of 25 percent, the Delta Corps 40 percent, and the Portland FGP program 64 percent of compensation costs to administration and supervision.

A closer look at these expenditures reveals that the Orlando CSEP (staff-to-participant ratio of 1-to-11) and Delta Corps (ratio of 1-to-7) programs are able to maintain acceptable ratios of staff to participants despite proportionally modest administrative/supervisory expenditures, doing so primarily by deputizing participants to provide administrative and supervisory support. Employing professional staff to perform these functions is more expensive: for example, the Portland Foster Grandparent Program expends an amount equivalent to 64 percent of its costs for compensation, yet has a staff-to-participant ratio of only 1-to-23. And

the Minnesota Senior Companion Program accepts a 1-to-39 ratio in order to hold administrative/supervisory spending to 25 percent of compensation costs. (In examining these ratios, it must be remembered that the compensation rates for these two programs are much lower than those for the other cases studied, thereby increasing their proportion of administrative/supervisory costs to compensation costs.)

When training and support services are added to a mix that already includes supervision and administrative costs, it becomes evident that all but the Orlando CSEP program devote a substantial proportion of resources to this array of program features: just over three-quarters of the compensation costs in the Portland and Minnesota programs, 91 percent in the Delta Corps, and 200 percent in the CPM program. Conversely, the Orlando CSEP program allocates only 18 percent for these functions--here, too, compensating through the use of enrollees to run job clubs, visit project sites and perform other program functions.

An assessment of the significance of these numbers reveals several key points. One is that programs have many choices about how to allocate resources. These range from options about proportioning expenditures (e.g., compensation versus administration) to various vehicles for accomplishing these functions (such as professional staff versus participants). Some efforts place a high proportion of expenditures into compensation and a low proportion into administration and support (Orlando CSEP). Others put a low proportion of expenditures into compensation and a high proportion into administration and support (CPM Mentor). Others strike a more even balance (Delta, Portland, Minnesota).

Which strategy works best? The answer depends on a variety of factors. The Portland and Minnesota programs are able to keep compensation costs low because of the special Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion stipend made possible by federal legislation. The Delta and Minnesota programs allocate a greater proportion of resources to transportation because these initiatives span a large geographic area, and participants are often required to travel 25 or more miles to reach job sites. The Portland program serves at-risk families with a history of child abuse, in whose homes seniors work in relative isolation during the day. Challenging and relatively isolated assignments of this sort require particularly skilled supervision and considerable support. In other words, the level of expenditure and proportioning of costs must be made to fit the particular nature, circumstances and objectives of a program.

All this having been said, program observation and participant and staff interviews suggest that most efforts underspend--and are underfunded--for the essential elements of effective practice as set out in this report's implementation section. Most could benefit from bolstering training, support, supervision, recruitment, and administration services and expenditures. Work remains to be done that can help clarify the price tag attached to fortifying programs in this manner.

7. Critical Mass is Missing

While the absolute numbers involved in senior community service are impressive, these efforts are actually quite small, scarce and scattered. There is nothing resembling critical mass in most locations. Approximately one-quarter of 1 percent of seniors are involved nationally, in contrast to the roughly 5 percent of the eligible population that was engaged in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion are available in only a small fraction of the counties around the country, and even in these, their presence can feel negligible. For example, in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, which has over two million residents, there are only 90 Foster Grandparents. This situation is particularly tragic, given that the Older American Volunteer Programs and Senior Community Service Employment Program have long waiting lists of interested seniors. The volume of these waiting lists is all the more remarkable in light of the programs' efforts to keep a low profile--efforts necessary to avoid stimulating still further demand that cannot be met due to funding constraints.

The Foster Grandparent Program provides a good case study of the historic underfunding and undersizing of senior service efforts. Five years after its 1965 creation, with the program established in locations around the country, the Senate Aging Committee was moved to write: "Despite the indisputable success of the program, no new projects were funded in 1970. Yet, there are nearly six million persons 60 and over living in poverty. Assuming that just 1 percent of this total (probably a conservative estimate) wanted to participate in the program, nearly 60,000 men and women could be providing valuable services to children in institutional settings." The Committee goes on to state that "literally hundreds of requests for Federal help to start new projects are turned away each year for lack of funds."[23] Twenty-three years later, the program counts 23,000 senior participants, only about one-third of the Committee's 1970 recommendation.

In addition to remaining small, these efforts have remained fairly obscure. Partly because of the need to suppress demand among participants and partly because small budgets have allowed few public relations expenditures, only the most modest efforts have been made to raise the profile of these programs. As a result, few in the community are aware of programs' presence, let alone their contributions to older Americans or others in the community.

The slow growth and obscurity of senior community service efforts have been further abetted by formidable obstacles at the cultural and organizational levels. Even in 1993, despite a significant body of evidence to the contrary, many potential program sponsors do not believe seniors to be sufficiently skilled or vigorous to contribute positively to public service efforts. Furthermore, many organizations are not sufficiently skilled or staffed to productively use older volunteers; without adequate infrastructure in place, they cannot grow rapidly without sacrificing quality.

Constituency is also a key factor in program growth. Consider the substantial growth of the Senior Community Service Employment Program, which currently receives $390 million in federal funding--compared with a combined $93.8 million received by the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs. This growth reflects the influence of the major American aging organizations, which are subcontractors to the Senior Community Service Employment Program and are thus institutionally invested in its operations. By contrast, the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs have no powerful, built-in constituency, save their relatively tiny executive director associations.

8. Significant Program Limitations are Faced

As it currently exists, the nature and quality of senior community service reveals several limitations. First, few men participate in the programs: only 11 percent of Foster Grandparents, 15 percent of Senior Companions, and 34 percent of participants in the Senior Community Service Employment Program are male. In addition, these efforts are legally restricted to low-income individuals, thereby screening out many working and middle-class individuals--including large numbers whose fixed incomes put them slightly above the eligibility line. Furthermore, the kinds of work available tend to be either caregiving, as is typical for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, or clerical and support service work, typical of Title V. This narrow band of offerings does not begin to approximate the wider variety of tasks seniors might accomplish.

Title V, which constitutes two-thirds of the existing stipended slots, has been divided for some years by tensions concerning the relative weights accorded its employment transition, income support and community service components. This internal struggle is instructive in two key respects. First, it reveals inherent tensions between the goals of employment transition and community service. In the Orlando program, for example, the objective is to keep the seniors from settling into assignments and losing sight of the goal of finding an unsubsidized job, preferably a private-sector job. Thus, the program discourages participants from remaining in community service placements longer than six months. While effective from an employment perspective (the Orlando effort manages to place 60% of participants), this practice presents a dilemma for host agencies. They cannot invest in developing the service role of seniors who will spend a maximum of six months in the program. As a result, seniors are placed in low-level, undemanding assignments.

Second, Title V's struggle reveals how institutional location can influence program structures and objectives. Consider that the Foster Grandparent Program and Green Thumb initiative, the forerunner of Title V, both originated within OEO with twin goals of community service and income support for disadvantaged elders. However, as the set of programs that would become Title V eventually lodged within DOL, placing seniors in unsubsidized employment became an increasingly prominent goal. On the other hand, the Foster Grandparent Program moved first to HEW, which emphasized human services, then to ACTION, which also focused on service. Different cultures emerged in the two programs, cultures reflected even in the nature of compensation: the Foster Grandparent stipend, which started out in the

1960s as equivalent to minimum wage, was decoupled from this standard and exempted from taxation. Conversely, the Title V stipend remains pegged to minimum wage. The Foster Grandparent Program remains weighted toward service; by contrast, despite some sponsors' attempts to stress community service, DOL's influence on Title V remains strong. If Title V is to reach its full service potential, its employment emphasis will require fundamental reexamination.

The Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion initiatives would require more modest enhancements. For example, the programs' income restrictions should be loosened to allow a wider range of participants; their 20-hour-per-week work requirement should be made more flexible to enable the continued participation of volunteers who can work only 10 hours per week; and the program's requirement that participants work exclusively one-on-one should be relaxed, since such an expectation is unrealistic in many settings, such as with Foster Grandparents in Head Start centers.

Finally, there are relatively few opportunities for joint service involving elders and youth. The Delta Corps and several initiatives funded by the former Commission on National and Community Service give some reason for optimism, and new funding from ACTION (prior to its merger into the Corporation for National and Community Service) to local RSVP programs has also increased the number of such programs.[24] However, this frontier remains largely uncharted.

9. Many Other Obstacles and Issues Remain

Fulfilling older Americans' potential for national service will mean overcoming substantial barriers--many specific to this population. Culturally, there is a deep-seated ambivalence about older adults as serious, capable, and productive citizens and service-providers. While everybody loves the sentimental image of seniors working with children in certain settings, such as infant care, there is too often an unwillingness to move past the sentimental.

The tendency to undervalue, stereotype and automatically ascribe frailty to seniors constitutes the essence of what gerontologist Robert Butler first labeled "ageism" in 1968 and what Harold Sheppard called a "deep-rooted revulsion at the perceived disintegration, physically and otherwise . . . supposed inevitably to take hold at a given birthday, 65 or thereabouts, or even earlier."[25]

The continuing vitality of ageism in the sphere of service is well-illustrated by a recent *New York Times* article informing readers that, according to experts, "the image and purpose of volunteering is being transformed" from "retirees providing supplementary services--the 'gray ladies' who push book carts through hospitals," to younger adults capable of tackling serious social problems.[26]

These patronizing and distorted images reveal only some of the cultural barriers facing efforts to engage older adults in challenging service opportunities. These images are often

self-fulfilling, since they become internalized by elders, many of whom quickly come to question whether they have anything of importance to contribute.

Furthermore, this barrier is not limited to external images. Programs, perhaps internalizing the same patronizing images that affect the elders, have frequently underutilized seniors in service assignments, whether by ignoring their possible contributions or placing them in assignments that do not fully use their skills and abilities.[27] This problem was evident from the first days of the Foster Grandparent Program, when participating agencies attempted to use seniors primarily to change bedpans, and it still persists at many agencies. One of the most important functions of Foster Grandparent Program staff is to ensure that seniors are being used in appropriate and engaging assignments.

The resistance of some host agency personnel to seniors in service may be due to their being overwhelmed with other duties and loath to take on additional supervisory functions; their lack of training in working with seniors in service roles; or their concerns that the elders will impinge on their turf and perhaps even threaten their jobs. The concern that service participants might displace regular staff is also a source of resistance to service programs among some labor groups. This issue merits further study.

THE SENIOR SERVICE GAP

As the lessons outlined here suggest, some barriers to senior service are specific to seniors, while others could be generalized to any service enterprise. Some are legitimate, and others are the product of distortions. Regardless, all must be addressed, and doing so will require strong knowledge about the many key issues related to senior service. For example, we know far too little about the cost-effectiveness of these programs, about the effects of various implementation strategies (such as compensation), and about displacement of either staff or volunteers. Much more must be learned before we will be in a position to make the most of these efforts.

Over the past 30 years, we have accomplished much in the arena of senior service. In many respects, the achievements have been quite remarkable: we have succeeded in putting low-income seniors, mostly women and a substantial proportion minorities, into situations that have allowed them to address critical social needs. Some of the most important work has been done in essential areas, such as caregiving. At the same time, we have managed to gain sophistication about what it takes to put senior service into action.

These accomplishments notwithstanding, the gap between promise and practice in the senior service area is still substantial and will not be easily bridged. However, by building on successes, paying attention to the lessons yielded by the past generation of programs, and striving to develop knowledge and practice in undeveloped areas, we may be able to make important inroads. While it is difficult to know how far national service for seniors can be carried, it is harder to believe that we can't go further than we have to date.

SENIORS IN SERVICE:

AGNES BENNETT AND LOUISE CASEY, PORTLAND (MAINE) FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

Agnes (Aggie) Bennett and Louise Casey are Foster Grandparents in Portland, Maine, where they serve on the pediatrics ward of Maine Medical Center. Both native Mainers--Aggie is a retired waitress and Louise a former minister--they are white women in their late 70s. They have been partners on the ward for a decade.

Aggie: *I came for one week, but stayed for 16 years. I saw that there was a need for [me]. And it was actually something that we needed. Older people don't want to sit around the house all day. I'm sure I don't. We get more out of being with the young people. They keep you young.*

Louise: *I've been here going on 10 years. I'll be 77 in a couple of weeks.*

Aggie: *Ever since Louise came in, I've had nobody but Louise as my partner. In fact, the kids refer to us as cousins. We see each other every day--unless one of us is sick or taking a vacation.*

Louise: *I think we serve quite a purpose because these children come from all over Maine and the northern border, sometimes four hours to get here, and these children with cancer--there's a lot of cancer--these children have to stay several weeks for chemo and radiation. Their parents have to go home. They have siblings to take care of. And the children get to know us. We're the red coats [the Foster Grandparent uniform in the hospital]. The white coats, the staff, have the needles, you know. The kids kind of shy away from them. But they know that we comfort them, and play with them. And they get real close to us, and we just love them, and the parents appreciate it so much. Send us notes.*

Aggie: *That little girl that just came up--just had an I.V. put in--I've had her since she was six days old, first time we saw her. She's 15 [years old] now. I was saying today, she sometimes seems to be mine. Sometimes, we have to remember, don't we, Louise, that the children go home sooner or later--but they do come back to see us.*

Louise: *And some children cry when they have to go home. One little girl who broke her leg said last week: You know, I've gotta come back to get my cast off and I'm awful glad because I'd never see you otherwise. So you get <u>real</u> close to the children. And there's a lot of abused children today. I can't get over some abused children coming along, just wanting to be loved.*

Aggie: *And I think we have a wonderful relationship between the staff and us. There's not one of them that's ever out of line. You think they might get mean with you, 'cause, after all, they're professional people. But never, never. They bend over backwards for you.*

Louise: *If it's snowing in the winter and it starts to snow bad, they'll tell us, "Go home, go home before it's icy! We don't want you goin' home when it's icy!"*

Aggie: *I think it was the second year that I was here, we started a little group to go out once a month for supper, and we still do it. Now this is office help, and dieticians, nurses. We see each other all the time at work, but we like that one night a month we can just socialize.*

I only came because of one individual, Jeannie [the former supervisor]. She called me up and said, I heard you might be a candidate for a Foster Grandmother. I said, I can't be a Foster Grandmother, I don't have any grandchildren. They said, we can find you some! So she came up to see me and I said to myself, now how'm I gonna get rid of this woman, you know, but you don't get rid of her very easy. My daughter had called her. My husband had died, been gone a year, and my daughter didn't like the way I was living. After my husband died, I didn't want to go out, to see people. Anyway, I said to Jeannie I'll go up and spend one week, but I won't promise you any more than that. That one week was 16 years.

But, it wasn't a hard decision: you just see the need. You can't be here an hour that you don't see those children need you, and you know you need something besides just sitting home. I don't like to rust away, I want to wear away!

Louise: *I had retired, about three years, and I was doing crocheting, things like that, makin' satin coat hangers. And I got so stiff I didn't even want to get out of the car to walk to the grocery store. I saw in the paper that there was Foster Grammies, and it said, "See Jeannie," so I thought I'll take a ride up to Parnell [where the program office was located] to see Jeannie. She said, "We have an opening in Yarmouth with handicapped children this summer. Would you like to work with handicapped?" I said I'd love it, and later I moved here to the hospital.*

It's like a family, the Foster Grandparents. We meet once a month and we kind of have a fellowship together, and speakers, and trips, all kinds of things going. It's really like a family when we get together.

Everybody will say, how can you take it when you lose a child, and I think Aggie and I feel the same way: heartbroken . . . But if we can do something when they're here, to make that little child happy, to smile, it's worth it all. We lose them, and it is heartbreaking.

Aggie: *I don't think I'd been here a year--when Sue Forth was head of the unit--and she asked me, "How strong a person are you?" I said, "Well, I've always prided myself that I was strong." She says, "We got a baby that is dying, and we promised that mother that her*

baby would not die in a crib. Do you think you could hold her?" Well, they put me in a room here, they kept checking on me, and that baby didn't die in no crib . . . that baby died in my arms. And I was always so grateful for that. I didn't feel fear . . . I just felt good. You know how it is, Louise, when you just sit with them, and your heart's aching, but you don't let them know it, that's all.

Louise: *They let me go in and sit with Tanya after she died, they said, would you feel better, because I loved her so. And they said, would you feel better just going in and sitting for a while? And I said, yes I would. And Cheryl, I was there when Cheryl died, almost in my arms. This is a family. When anything happens, and we can get there to the funeral, we're there.*

Aggie: *You know something, though, it does make you a stronger person. It does. It's hard, but I don't think I could be anywhere else. This is home.*

Louise: *It's such a joy to work here. Our supervisor is great. She's so interested in us. And I work with Aggie. We just fit. It isn't a job, it's a joy. And you love the children. When the children are sick, sometimes we can't wait to get back the next day to see how they're doing. You call in sometimes, in the middle of the night. You've got a sick baby, and you want to know how they're doing.*

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Experience over the past three decades suggests that older Americans can make a valuable contribution in a set of important areas--most notably caregiving, where America faces and will continue to face a deepening crisis. There is further evidence to suggest that seniors themselves benefit from this service experience, and that across the country, low-income seniors are willing to show up in the tens of thousands for assignments requiring substantial commitment. Overall, there is reason to believe that the powerful rationale for engaging older Americans in national service will translate into reality, at least under certain circumstances. In short, we've done fairly well at what we've actually tried to do.

Despite these encouraging indications, the gulf between the potential contribution of seniors and what is seen in practice remains substantial. Opportunities are available for only a tiny fraction of the senior population, while many who would like to serve either languish on waiting lists or are unaware of service possibilities. Current positions engage only a narrow band of elders, almost exclusively low-income women; and existing efforts draw on a relatively narrow set of the talents and experience residing in the older population. Furthermore, the structure and strategies of available programs are limited, and research on outcomes and implementation of senior service programs remains thin. In the absence of a substantial overhaul of existing efforts, this elder service gap seems likely to widen.

It is difficult to predict whether we can ever eliminate the gap because so many questions are yet unanswered. Will seniors, particularly middle-class seniors, show up in substantial numbers to serve? Will they be able to execute a wide variety of essential tasks without engendering displacement? Might this effort be accomplished at a reasonable cost? While sturdy answers to these and other questions are not in sight, a number of indications suggest that the service gap can at least be narrowed. Ultimately, the only way to find out is by moving forward while paying heed to lessons learned over the past three decades, by staying open to research and experimentation, and by showing a willingness to adapt.

For some time, we have been subsisting off a set of innovations developed in 1965. These War on Poverty programs, and the efforts they spawned, bequeathed to us the rudiments of a national service system for low-income seniors. However, these elements must be expanded, refined (in some cases, fully overhauled), and complemented through new innovation; otherwise, we cannot create a system that has a chance of harnessing the potential of senior service to develop something akin to a real Senior Corps, an Experience Corps, or any of the other visionary programs put forward by distinguished proponents of this ideal.

CLOSING THE GAP

The time to proceed on senior service issues is at hand. In the background is the age revolution and growing awareness of its implications, including the necessity of rethinking many of our assumptions about the nature of old age and the function of the older

population. And we now have enough experience to take stock and extract useful lessons from the major federal programs. There are also a variety of small-scale experiments now under way, such as the Delta Service Corps--which is intergenerational, engages seniors regardless of income, employs team and corps structure, and provides flexibility in hours worked--and the upcoming "Summer of Safety" initiative--which will involve the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and RSVP programs but will drop many of the guidelines and restrictions that typically govern hours and stipending in the programs. Additional models and demonstrations being initiated in the private sector should add further to the pool of knowledge.

The timing is right for policy reasons as well, since the nature of both national service and productive aging in our society have been under discussion and reexamination. The Clinton administration's interest in "seasons of service," the creation of the new but evolving Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps initiative, the Administration's request for modest expansion in funding for the National Senior Volunteer Corps programs (the first such request in years), and even the renaming of the Older American Volunteer Programs as National Senior Volunteer "Corps" Programs suggest this is an important juncture at which to evaluate the appropriate role of seniors in national service.

In addition, potential roles for senior service may well exist in conjunction with some of the leading policy initiatives of the day, including health care reform, welfare reform, the crime bill, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the school-to-work transition legislation. Examples abound of current programs providing key services in all these areas, ranging from in-home care to apprenticeship roles, to the training of welfare mothers.

Next year will also mark the 30th anniversary of both the Foster Grandparent and Green Thumb programs, and of the War on Poverty that gave them life, milestones likely to contribute to a climate of reexamination. Next year will also see the first White House conference on aging in more than 20 years; the potential contributions of seniors to society is an important topic that will undoubtedly be addressed. (The last White House Conference on Aging, in 1971, led to a doubling of the budget for existing senior programs, such as the Foster Grandparent initiative and the programs that would eventually become Title V; to the initial funding of RSVP; and to the establishment of the Senior Companion Program.)

Yet another reason for acting quickly is that our efforts in this area will be best served not by simply seeding specific projects here and there, but by taking a longer-term, institution-building perspective, with the eventual objective of implementing national service for older Americans in full form by 2020, when the baby boom generation begins reaching 65. It will take time and care to nurture appropriate institutions.

One final reason for counseling urgency is that today's cohort of seniors, born into the Depression and World War II and imbued with the values of sacrifice and sharing forged by hard times, may be particularly well suited to establishing an enlarged senior service effort.

Getting an enterprise of this sort off the ground may be more problematic with subsequent generations.

A VISION OF SENIOR SERVICE

What might national service for older Americans look like in "full form"? It is difficult to get an accurate sense of this because we are currently so far from that goal. Polls are misleading because they really only test preferences in the context of currently available opportunities and the current set of cultural values. Substantial growth and improvement of opportunities might lure more people forward and might change broader perceptions and expectations of service.

Based on past experience, a reasonable goal to reach by the year 2020 might be the creation of service opportunities--meaning high-intensity, high-commitment roles--for 1 percent of the senior population, or approximately 500,000 adults over 65. The modesty of this proposal is underscored by recalling that 500,000 youth were engaged in the CCC alone in 1938, at a time when the country was half the size it will be in 2020. The approximate federal cost of such a plan, in current dollars, would be approximately $3 billion--at an average program cost of $6,000 per volunteer working 20 hours a week for 50 weeks a year for a stipend. (This cost, higher than the current average cost of $5,357, reflects the fact that high-quality service will require more resources for program support than are currently expended. This more than offsets savings represented by having a higher mix of programs like Foster Grandparents, which pay $2.45 an hour, than of Title V programs, which pay $4.25.) Costs might be brought down even further, depending on the selected mix of compensation and program support strategies, with the $6,000 figure representing a likely middle point among these options.

A plan of this sort should be phased in incrementally, as effective practice and infrastructural requirements are developed. Our goal might be to expand the current number of slots to involve 150,000 seniors over the next five years, build to 1 percent of the senior population--or approximately 350,000 participants--by 2005, then maintain that proportion of slots as that population grows. Therefore, the cost in 2005 would be approximately $1.5 billion. (Obviously these cost projections are imprecise and approximate at this juncture, and would need to be reevaluated regularly.) In return, American communities would receive 500 million hours of elder service annually.

Simply implementing a bigger system would be useless, however, unless we also maximize the three principal areas of benefit associated with national service for seniors--benefits to those served, benefits to those rendering service, and benefits to the larger community--thus achieving the "electric charge" that seems to come from their interplay. Indeed, policy should strive not only to generate this charge, but to raise the voltage through a structure and set of activities permitting all three elements the greatest combined power.

Raising the voltage will likely entail making specific improvements derived from lessons of the past. These might include providing an expanded menu of service opportunities in more diverse settings; involving a broader set of skills; engaging a wider range of seniors, particularly in terms of education, income, and gender; putting seniors to work in ways that not only maximize efficiency and minimize turnover, but are likely to meet their developmental, spiritual, and physical needs; making service available to older adults in every county and community around the country; raising the profile of senior community service both nationally and locally; blending federal action with community-based funding, decision-making, and responsiveness; and sponsoring careful outcome and process research on existing national and local programs.

Ultimately, we might strive to develop a system that provides opportunities for senior service at various levels--not only a range of options to work a few hours a week through established volunteer programs, but appealing full- and half-time opportunities. If these efforts were effectively linked, interested seniors might move in and out of various options, perhaps serving full time for a year or two, then making the transition to work half time or less.

All these efforts should be anchored in a vision of senior service that is substantially, though not exclusively, intergenerational, looking at opportunities for seniors not only to serve the younger generation, but to serve side by side with youth for the greater good of the community. This point leads to consideration of the fundamental compatibility of senior and youth service. Not only are the skills and perspectives that younger and older generations bring to the table often complementary, but elder service can reinforce a central goal of youth service: instilling a lifetime habit of service. The presence of seniors in service both reinforces that habit for youth and shows them that a mechanism exists for acting on that habit at a future juncture in their lives.

Finally, while the lead role in stimulating and supporting the institution of senior service has always fallen to the federal government, the private sector has important roles to play as well. Perhaps the most important are those to be played by aging organizations and private foundations. The major aging organizations can help raise awareness among seniors (particularly membership organizations), provide financial support, and lobby for more service opportunities. As noted earlier, the considerable growth of Title V, which receives more than four times the federal funding of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs, is testimony to the power of this constituency. As for private foundations, they might play much the same role they have played in the youth service arena, where their underwriting of research, advocacy and innovation activities has contributed substantially to the growth of a well-grounded youth service movement in this country.

NEXT STEPS

Ultimately, implementing this vision will require more than a set of appealing principles, a responsible and incremental perspective, or even increased funding--though all these elements count. Also necessary will be a new period of innovation and construction, building the

architecture capable of sustaining responsible expansion by fortifying existing mechanisms and creating new ones, both nationally and at the local level. Taken together, these efforts might provide real "critical mass" around senior service, and help constitute, for the first time, something resembling national service for older Americans.

This objective can best be served by three steps: making the most of existing mechanisms; launching a series of new demonstration and research efforts; and building the infrastructure necessary to sustain and refine these efforts.

1. Strengthen Existing Service Opportunities

The first step toward national service for seniors involves bolstering the trio of programs that currently provide the vast majority of service opportunities: the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and Senior Community Service Employment programs. The following sections suggest positive future directions for these programs.

Expand the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs. When Sargent Shriver was first briefed on what was to become the Foster Grandparent Program, he broke in impatiently, "It's not big enough! Not big enough!"[1] Five years later, the Senate Aging Committee called for an increase in the program's size to 60,000.[2] After nearly 25 more years, the program is barely over one-third this size, and the combined size of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs is just over half this size. Meanwhile, the vast need for caregiving to children and youth on one hand, and older adults and the ailing on the other hand, along with the track record of these programs, strongly supports dramatic expansion. These efforts, which already carry substantial waiting lists, could more than double in size over the next five years.

While expansion could occur in a wide range of settings where Foster Grandparents serve, one particularly promising area is in Head Start centers. A partnership between the two War on Poverty programs has existed for some time; the collaboration even received a small amount of additional funding in 1992 through the Commission on National and Community Service. Foster Grandparents could be placed in most, if not all, Head Start centers in communities where both programs are present--especially in light of the new National Service Act's encouragement of federal interagency agreements.

Foster Grandparents are also working as mentors in California's GAIN program, a welfare reform initiative, and might be involved in similar efforts, providing child care or mentoring for young mothers. In Massachusetts and elsewhere, Foster Grandparents work at Job Corps locations, providing counseling and vocational advice to participants. In many parts of the country, they work with crack-addicted babies and children. These activities might easily be expanded, perhaps by tying in Foster Grandparents with federal initiatives. For example, the Clinton administration's new teenage pregnancy initiative may involve placing one million mentors in the nation's poorest schools. The engagement of Foster Grandparents in those roles might be an important step toward reaching this ambitious goal.[3]

Promising opportunities for public and private partnership may also exist for Foster Grandparents through teaming up with national voluntary youth-serving organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs; Girls, Inc.; Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America; and the Scouts. New project models currently being demonstrated might also provide roles; in New York City, for example, Foster Grandparents are being placed with high-risk families as part of a promising family preservation demonstration. Public libraries, increasingly populated by latchkey children, are another area that could benefit from Foster Grandparent presence.

Opportunities for responsible expansion of the Senior Companion program also abound. Although the shape of health care reform efforts is unclear at present, provisions for expanded in-home care of the frail and disabled may provide an important outlet for companion service. New provisions--also involving federal interagency cooperation--should soon take effect that will sanction use of Medicaid dollars for Senior Companions under the Health Care Finance Administration's Medicaid Waiver Program. (Medicaid is already funding Senior Companions in a number of states.) Elsewhere, candidates for expansion include current demonstrations and experiments, such as efforts in which able senior armed-services veterans are being matched with homebound veterans, and in which Companions are working with AIDS patients. One notable prospect for public/private partnership is the possibility that major national insurance companies will provide support for Companions as part of their coverage.

The basic structure of each program should also be refined. This could include loosening hours-worked and income-eligibility requirements, as well as some restrictions on the types of projects pursued. A forthcoming federal study on the subject of income eligibility will likely greatly facilitate the updating of eligibility guidelines.

In focusing on expansion, existing programs should use their special dispensation to pay a stipend exempt from various taxes and from counting against a set of subsidies. New initiatives could have difficulty securing this important exemption.

Reexamine the Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V). While there is little solid research on this program, interviews with officials at national sponsoring agencies, the U.S. Department of Labor, and local communities suggest that the community service component of Title V might benefit from reexamination and revamping.

Bolstering the Title V program would add enormously to the available portfolio of national service opportunities for seniors. By far the largest of the three federal initiatives, with 65,000 slots, Title V boasts a powerful constituency of the country's major aging organizations and thus has enormous flexibility in the types of services it can provide. Unlike the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs, Title V's efforts are not federally determined. Thus, enrollees can be deployed to meet critical local needs; furthermore, there are opportunities to provide assignments appropriate to a wide range of senior preferences.

Currently, at least two distinct strands exist within this somewhat sprawling program. One primarily serves younger seniors, between 55 and 65, who join the program to get help returning to unsubsidized jobs in the labor market. The second, much larger, strand serves "career enrollees," those who have essentially stopped looking for unsubsidized work and will likely remain in subsidized placements in nonprofit and public agencies until eventually leaving the program.

The priority, quality and level of service performed by second-strand participants should be maximized, allowing participants to make the greatest possible contribution to their communities. The Labor Department and the 10 national sponsoring organizations, possibly in collaboration with the Corporation for National and Community Service, should explore options for doing so. In addition, valuable dividends might result from new research looking closely at service implementation--specifically how well individual projects work, which program practices are most effective, and what types of host agencies offer the most successful service opportunities.

Ultimately, a change in perspective would likely be required to raise the status of service within Title V. Some sponsors currently treat service as a means toward the far more exalted end of unsubsidized employment--an approach that stands in sharp contrast to those of efforts like the Foster Grandparent Program or the Delta Service Corps. In those programs, service is regarded as an end in itself, and a noble one at that.

2. Embark on a New Period of Innovation

Innovation includes, but should not be limited to, brand new initiatives being investigated demonstrated and potentially established. There is considerable room for innovation within the nationally defined program focus of efforts like the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs.

Perhaps the most important potential enhancement to these programs would be an initiative likely to appeal to older men, a group that has been reluctant to participate in existing caregiving-focused programs. In part, the paucity of men is due to their living shorter lives and having greater financial security than women, though interviews suggest that the nature of existing programs is at least as important. There are general and specific reasons for desiring the participation of these individuals. Most obviously, their addition would increase the number of service participants. In addition, these men would bring a unique set of skills, experience and interests. Finally, many assignments are better handled by men. For example, many boys and adolescents living in poverty are without positive male figures in their lives; studies have shown the importance of male role models in helping males make a successful transition to adulthood. At the other end of the age spectrum, many retired men in need of service say they prefer the companionship of another male.

In addition to attempting to make existing efforts more attractive to male participants, we can explore three promising areas for programs that, while open to participation by either gender,

might draw equal or greater proportions of men. These are environmental work, apprenticeship efforts and professional services. Pilots and precedents abound in all three areas, among them the Ventures in Community Improvement and Focus Hope apprenticeship projects; the early Green Thumb efforts focused on highway beautification and the Senior Environmental Employment Program currently run by EPA; and the SCORE program of the Small Business Administration, the private National Executive Service Corps and the free clinics created around the country by groups of retired doctors.[4] The scope, intensity, and range of activities in each of these areas might be dramatically extended.

The idea of professional services performed by highly educated seniors recalls President Kennedy's National Service Corps proposal, which concentrated on the large number of retired physicians, lawyers, accountants, and other highly skilled professionals. Not only might these programs attract more men, they serve to secure the participation of seniors living above poverty circumstances, particularly middle- and upper-middle-class older Americans. While one of the great triumphs of our efforts in the senior service area has been the involvement of low-income seniors, the group most likely to be overlooked when it comes to seeking a positive contribution to society, one of our great failures has been a tendency to forget everyone else, thereby cutting off the potential contributions of an enormously rich resource. This is a legacy of the backdoor route by which we became involved in senior service--as part of the War on Poverty.

A variety of possible routes can be taken to tap the talents of more advantaged individuals. For a number of years, a non-stipended option for participation in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs has existed, allowing participation of older adults whose income puts them above the eligibility line. However, this option has languished, and few such seniors have been recruited. This option might be pursued more seriously. Alternatively, a portion of expanded Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion slots might be freed from income guidelines entirely, without taking away the stipend. This prospect would allow programs the advantage of treating all participants the same. While low-income seniors would benefit disproportionately from the stipend, the fact that everyone would receive the same compensation would prevent any stigmatization.

As a rule, new program experiments might be undertaken with fewer or no income restrictions. Unstipended or open-access approaches might also be tried with a service-oriented track of the Title V program. If the Title V program proves resistant to a service route that might be used in such a way, another option for involving a wider span of participation--one we might want to pursue in any case--is developing a high-intensity track within the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

A portion of current RSVP volunteers already volunteer 20 hours a week or more, though the average involvement is approximately four hours per week. Formalizing 20- and 40-hour-per week options, and providing additional supports and benefits to this group--including, possibly, a stipend--might increase both the size and effectiveness of such options. Not only might new middle- and upper-middle-class individuals be drawn into the service

enterprise (meaning the group of participants making a major life commitment to service), but some of the nearly half-million current RSVP volunteers now working one or two days a week might be persuaded to raise their commitment to half time. As with Title V positions, these opportunities would have the advantage of flexibility: they could be oriented and changed to meet pressing local needs; and constructed to accommodate the special offerings and preferences of higher-income seniors, thereby raising the likelihood of participation among individuals not interested in the caregiving duties favored by programs like Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions.

As we consider involving middle-class seniors in these efforts, it should be emphasized that new initiatives like the Delta Service Corps are already experimenting with this approach; it must also be remembered that programs like VISTA and Peace Corps have been involving seniors across the socioeconomic spectrum, and paying them a stipend, for years and years. By law, 20 percent of VISTA program slots are filled by the over-55 population. As mentioned earlier, the new Summer of Safety initiative will open up stipended slots for seniors of any income level through the three National Senior Volunteer Corps programs.

Participants in all these programs might be particularly encouraged to work in intergenerational situations, where they can serve side by side with youth, including young people in AmeriCorps. We need to explore partnerships between new and existing senior service efforts and this new initiative. Within AmeriCorps, which permits participation of Americans of all ages but--due to its education benefits--is particularly focused on youth, seniors might be targeted on tasks that either enhance the quality of service performed by youth, increase the personal development of young people in the program, or make it easier for these youth to perform service. Seniors in AmeriCorps might also serve to stabilize youth service programs and function as institutional memory. While young people will likely serve one-year stints before moving on, older persons might be permitted to stay longer. A group of elder AmeriCorps participants with experience and a sense of the program's evolution might be a valuable complement to the energetic but inexperienced new cohorts of youth who will rotate through the initiative.

While it is likely that AmeriCorps will involve only a small number of older Americans, a service program with a balance of elders and youth serving side by side might be a worthwhile model for a future demonstration project. Existing youth service and conservation initiatives might also be persuaded to offer seniors opportunities for joint service.

Two of the most highly regarded programs of this type, The San Francisco Conservation Corps and The Los Angeles Conservation Corps, have already proposed involving older adults in a variety of capacities, including apprenticing corpsmembers in skilled trades, providing child care for corpsmembers' children, and serving as crew supervisors.

Beyond developing new demonstrations and experiments designed to attract new groups of participants, such as older men and middle-class seniors, and bringing older adults and youth

together for joint service, new program strategies might also be tested. Perhaps the most important potential changes center on compensation. As mentioned, one approach to be tested is providing stipends regardless of income, based on the philosophy that anybody willing to commit to half-time work or more should receive at least a modest stipend to provide additional incentive and cover costs associated with the commitment. Historically, national service programs from the Civilian Conservation Corps through AmeriCorps have provided this kind of compensation.

Another possible option is varying compensation levels, allowing comparison of the effects of sub-minimum-wage stipends exempt from taxation or from influencing eligibility for income-based subsidies, with minimum-wage stipends both taxable and affecting subsidies. Another possible variation might be paying participants in lump sums--$200 a month in Foster Grandparents, for example--rather than in hourly increments; this might prevent the stipend from seeming like a wage and thus reinforce participants' view of themselves as volunteers. Another important and relatively unexplored option is providing alternative forms of compensation, such as service credits, health benefits, long-term care credits, and even property tax relief. The service credit option has developed through the work of Edgar Cahn and others; however, the other possible compensation forms remain relatively untested.

Commitment level is another program area worthy of further examination and experimentation. Should the expected weekly commitment for senior service efforts be 20 hours? One alternative strategy that might be tested is offering greater flexibility, perhaps a commitment of 10 to 20 hours per week, following a two-year commitment to half-time service. This approach might allow older participants to continue involvement when they can no longer work every day for half a day. Experimentation around supervision levels, training, and other key program features might also be undertaken.

3. Build Infrastructure at the National and Local Levels

Moving national service in this country to a new level of understanding and performance will require not only specific innovations, but an ongoing capacity to develop and adapt at both the national and local levels.

National Structure. The logical home for federally sponsored service efforts involving seniors is the new Corporation for National and Community Service. As the Corporation evolves over the coming years, it must figure out how to orchestrate participation of older Americans in both intergenerational programs like AmeriCorps and senior-focused initiatives like the National Senior Volunteer Corps programs. It must also explore its relationship to service projects that involve seniors but are under the auspices of other federal agencies, most notably Title V.

At the same time, a new national entity must be developed either inside or outside of government to provide muscle to a set of essential--and long-neglected--marketing, technical assistance, demonstration and research functions that can raise the level of knowledge,

awareness and implementation of senior service across the country. While some of these functions might be carried out by the Corporation for National and Community Service--which, in any event, should participate in the funding of such an institution--the creation of a not-for-profit, intermediary organization is preferable. Robert Morris and Frank Caro of the University of Massachusetts-Boston's Gerontology Institute have proposed creation of a National Center on Productive Volunteering, which would focus on "high-intensity, high-responsibility" efforts involving seniors in community service.[5] This center would conduct research on existing programs, run demonstration projects, provide technical assistance, and promote service efforts among other functions; the federal government, private foundations, and national aging organizations might be convinced to cosponsor the center.

Local Structure. While more effective performance of the national entity's key functions would undoubtedly strengthen senior community service activities at all levels, a gap would still remain at the local level. Just as critical functions and mass are missing nationally, they are also missing locally. Individual programs exist, but there is little sense that they are part of an effective whole. Even if the programs grew in size and number, fragmentation seems likely to continue to plague these efforts. A collaboration of local corps capable of giving real meaning to the often-invoked, but frequently hollow, senior corps concept is sorely needed.

These entities could be called "Experience Corps"--the name longtime elder service advocate John Gardner selected for the program he initiated five years ago in Palo Alto.[6] In many respects, these entities could evolve from the RSVP structure, but they would be expected to go beyond the functions currently performed by RSVP.

Local Experience Corps would perform a variety of functions designed to stimulate seniors into making a major life commitment to service. They would help counteract the fragmentation, lack of visibility, and other constraints facing existing efforts. One of their most important roles would be to cut the transaction costs involved in seniors serving.

Functions of Experience Corps might include:

1. Serving as a single point of entry for older adults interested in serving in a given community, and as a simple, visible, straightforward place seniors can contact regarding the range of available opportunities. Currently, this function is scattered unevenly among local Volunteer Centers, RSVPs, AARP Volunteer Talent Banks and other clearinghouses. The local Corps might help coordinate these services while providing a one-stop conduit for service.

2. Performing local marketing to raise awareness among seniors and others in the community about the contributions of older adults in service. This function might include mounting high-visibility signature projects engaging seniors from across a variety of programs--as well as young people--for short-term efforts.

3. Conducting training for seniors involved in community service. These efforts would concentrate on generic topics useful to participants across a range of programs, since individual programs would likely prefer to retain program-specific training functions; however, the Corps might also contract to perform some of this training on request.

4. Developing demand for senior service through training and outreach focused on local organizations that might potentially use older volunteers, including work with management and staff concerning the productive engagement of seniors. Through these efforts, the Corps would build the infrastructure to ensure that elders are engaged effectively. Youth service programs might be a particular target of these efforts, encouraging creation of intergenerational service opportunities.

5. Developing new projects and partnerships designed to tap the talents of older adults in response to local needs. These might include both Corps-initiated efforts and a program development fund to support local social entrepreneurs with innovative senior service ideas.

6. Providing opportunities for cross-fertilization and contact between elders from different programs, through support groups, continuing education programs, project training, signature projects and group activities focused on senior service. The Corps might also make its headquarters hospitable for seniors involved in service to informally socialize during their free time.

7. Undertaking placement efforts designed to help interested seniors find employment and training for unsubsidized full- or part-time jobs considered to be community service, such as teaching or child care. In this way, the Corps might contribute to developing a career ladder that would assist interested elders in taking on progressively more responsible and demanding service assignments.

Ideally, the management and direction of the local Corps would be in the hands of older adults, who should occupy a substantial number of staff and board positions. Start-up as well as ongoing funding should come in part from the federal government, with local matching dollars being provided by foundations, United Ways, AARP chapters, and other groups with an interest in senior community service and productive aging. Considerable latitude in terms of the particular constellation of functions carried out by the Corps would be essential. These entities could either grow out of existing institutions--most likely RSVPs, but possibly other senior service programs or university institutes--or be developed anew. In any event, key organizations, such as the local Senior Companion, Foster Grandparent, RSVP, and Title V programs, must be intimately involved from the outset.

A demonstration project focused on developing the concept of local Experience Corps is a required next step for fleshing out the feasibility and full potential of these mechanisms.

VI. FINAL REFLECTIONS TOWARD A MORE GENERATIVE SOCIETY

Opportunities in American social policy tend to come in windows that open and close periodically, and the experience of national service for older Americans is no exception. In the 1930s, the CCC and the National Youth Administration revealed the role an active government could play in stimulating service by youth. In the 1960s, War on Poverty programs, such as Foster Grandparents and Green Thumb, demonstrated that this role could be extended to low-income older Americans. Today, with national service again on the public mind, we have the opportunity to build on the legacy of the 1960s while preparing for the expected circumstances of the 2020s, when America will possess double its current senior population.

A central task before us is to close the gap between the potential and practice of senior service, not only out of a desire to meet current needs but to produce what historian Peter Laslett calls the "institutional inheritance" for coming waves of older Americans.[1] Our experience in this area provides essential clues on how to proceed, but few guarantees. Much of the territory ahead remains uncharted.

Moving forward means engaging this uncertainty, and will not be cheap or easy. One reason for going ahead is the potential benefits of service for participating seniors as well as recipients. Without minimizing the importance of such benefits, however, something even more fundamental is likely at stake. As James Fallows observed, "People don't live in markets, they live in societies."[2] The survival of these societies, and of the social fabric that binds them together, ultimately depends on people--of different classes, from different ethnic groups, in different generations--recognizing their dependence on one another. National service for older Americans has the potential to bring individuals together--across class, across ethnicity, and most strikingly, across generations--in ways that help them recognize and appreciate these essential ties.

As such, these efforts might help create a more "generative" society--one dedicated to posterity and striving to extend Erikson's great injunction "I am what survives of me" until it becomes the defining outlook of a generation. Such a society would not only be a more pleasant one in which to live, but one capable of reproducing itself over time.

NOTES

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APPENDIX A

COST DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1

OVERALL COST--NATIONAL PROGRAMS
(Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, SCSEP/Title V)

	Number of Slots	Total Cost (Millions)	Cost Per Slot
FEDERAL	90,313	$483.8	$5,357
COMBINED FEDERAL/NON-FEDERAL	95,173	599.5	6,299

Table 2

TOTAL COSTS OF NATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROGRAM	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT SLOTS	COMPENSATION RATE (Per Hour)	TOTAL COSTS (Millions)	COST PER SLOT
SCSEP	64,423	$4.25	$461	$7,162
FGP	20,440	2.45	94	4,599
SCP	10,310	2.45	44.5	4,316

Table 3

FEDERAL COSTS OF NATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROGRAM	NUMBER OF FEDERAL SLOTS	COMPENSATION RATE (Per Hour)	FEDERAL COSTS (Millions)	FEDERAL COST PER SLOT
SCSEP	64,423	$4.25	$390	$6,053
FGP	18,100	2.45	64.8	3,580
SCP	7,790	2.45	29	3,723

Table 4

BASIC DATA--FIVE CASE STUDIES

PROGRAM	# OF PARTICIPANTS	APPROX. HOURS OF ANNUAL SERVICE	ESTIMATED # OF PEOPLE SERVED ANNUALLY	# OF STAFF (Adm./Sup'n.)	RATIO OF STAFF TO PARTICIPANTS	% OF ADM./SUP'N. COSTS TO COMPENSATION COSTS	% OF SUPPORT SERVICES, TRAINING, ADM. AND SUP'N. COSTS TO COMPENSATION COSTS
Portland FGP	96	100,000	300	4.2 (1.7 adm. and 2.5 field)	1 to 23	64%	77%
Minnesota SCP	202	225,000	1,600	5.2 (1.6 adm. and 3.5 field)	1 to 39	25	76
CPM Mentor Program	30	10,000	132	1.4 (both adm. and field)	1 to 21	136	200
Orlando CSEP	145	150,000	Not Available	13.5 (both adm. and field)	1 to 11	18	18
Delta Service Corps	392	350,000	Not Available	53 (23 adm. and 30 field)	1 to 7	40	91

Table 5

COST COMPARISON--FIVE CASE STUDIES

PROGRAM	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS			PROGRAM COSTS (dollars in thousands)						COST PER PARTICIPANT SLOT
	# OF PARTICIPANTS	COMPENSATION RATE	HRS. PER WEEK	COMPENSATION	SUPPORT SERVICES	TRAINING	SUP'VSN	ADMIN	TOTAL	
Portland FGP	96	$2.45/hr.	20	$ 245 (54%)	$ 48 (10.5%)	$ 2 (.5%)	$ 76 (16.7%)	$ 83 (18.3%)	$ 454	$4,729
Minnesota SCP	202	2.45/hr.	20	522 (59%)	255 (25.5%)	10 (1%)	80 (8.6%)	55 (5.9%)	922	4,564
CPM Mentor Program		132/mo. ($5.30/hr.)	25/mo. ($5.75/wk.)	59 (34.4%)	12 (6%)	26 (14.6%)	40 (22.5%)	40 (22.5%)	177	5,900
Orlando CSEP*	145	4.32/hr.	20	747 (85%)	---	---	---	132 (15%)	879	6,062
Delta Service Corps**	392	4.42/hr.	9-40	1,470 (52.6%)	520 (18.5%)	230 (8.1%)	445 (15.8%)	142 (5%)	2,807	7,160

*Figures not kept for Support Training and Supervision categories. They are lumped in administration; however, interviews suggest they are very small.

**Figures are for a 17-month period from start-up through the end of first calendar year. Compensation cost includes full-time youth participants as well as seniors. The adjusted cost per participant slot for a 12-month year is $5,054.

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Table 6

COST PER PARTICIPANT--FIVE CASE STUDIES

PROGRAM COSTS (dollars in thousands)

PROGRAM	COMPENSATION	SUPPORT SERVICES	TRAINING	SUPERVISION	ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL COSTS	COST PER PARTICIPANT SLOT
Portland FGP	$2,552	$ 500	$ 20	$ 792	$ 865	$ 454	$4,729
Minnesota SCP	2,584	1,262	50	396	272	922	4,564
CPM Mentor Program	1,967	400	867	1,333	1,333	177	5,900
Orlando CSEP	5,152	---	---	---	910	879	6,062
Delta Corps*	3,750*	1,327	587	1,135	361	2,807	7,161

* Cost for 17-month period, including full-time participants.